THE *Knowledge of* DIVINE THINGS FROM *REVELATION*, NOT FROM REASON OR NATURE.

WHEREIN

The Origin and Obligation of Religious Truths are demonſtrated: Arguments of Deiſts, Moraliſts, &c. proved to have no Foundation in Nature or Reaſon.

The Inlets of Knowledge,

The Law of Nature,

The ſeveral Texts of Scripture relating to this Subject,

The Works of Creation,

The Eternal Fitneſs and Reaſon of Things,

The Demonſtrations of a Supreme Being, &c. are fully conſidered and explained.

Λόγον δή κ᾽ πολὺν κ᾽ καλὸν ἔχει, τότε μὲν ὅτε περὶ θεῶν ὧν ἀνθρώποις διανοήματα πρῶτα, ὡς τ᾽ ἐγένοντο, οἱοί τ᾽ ἐγίγνοντο, κ᾽ ὅιας μετεχειρίζοντο πράξεις, μὴ κατὰ νοῦν τοῖς σώφροσι λέγεσθαι, μηδ᾽ ἓ φίλως.—Luculenta ſanè & magna ratione innititur, quando primùm homines de Diis cogitare cœperunt, & quod eſſent, & quomodo, & quibus in rebus verſarentur: illas opiniones non ex Sapientûm quidem mente & ſententia primùm ortas.

Plato Epinom. p. 988.

By a GENTLEMAN of *Brazen-Noſe* College, *Oxford*; now of the Dioceſe of *Cheſter*.

LONDON,

Printed by *J. Watts*: And ſold by *B. Dod* at the *Bible* and *Key* in *Ave-Mary-Lane* near *Stationers-Hall*, *J. Fletcher* at *Oxford*, and *T. Merrill* at *Cambridge*. MDCCXLIII.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

The Enquiry ſtated, and Objections anſwered.

DIVINE Things what, and the different Methods of knowing them, Page 1
Only to be known from Revelation, p. 2, 3
That this may diſturb the Peace of Religion, p. 3 1ſt Object.
That this Account of things has been approved by moſt eminent Perſons, p. 3, 4 Anſw. 1.
That to ſeek for Truth with Meekneſs, will never prejudice Religion, p. 5. 2.
That this Procedure is conſonant to the Ideas of God, ibid. 3.
That it beſt agrees with the Intent and End of all Religion, as giving a better Syſtem of the Divine Nature and of Duty, than mere Reaſon ever did, for the manifold Defects of which the Maintainers of Natural Religion are forced to make large Apologies, p. 6 4.
That it weakens the Arguments which have been ſucceſsfully urged againſt Infidelity, p. 8 2d Object.
Theſe very Arguments were drawn from Revelation, ibid. Anſw. 1.
To make Reaſon the Meaſure of Truth is to pervert the Order of things, p. 9. 2.
Moderns have moſt unreaſonably exalted Reaſon, p. 10
Infidelity hath joined iſſue with, and triumphed over them, p. 11
Philoſophy mixed with Religion always debaſes it, p. 12
We may admire Reaſon, but muſt adore Revelation, p. 13
Man perfect in his kind, but not omniſcient, ibid.
Ancients always baffled in the Diſcovery of Truth, ibid.
Which ought to make us diſtruſt Reaſon, p. 14

Plutarch *and* Cicero *confeſs the Impoſſibility of Reaſon to find out Truth,* Page 14, 15

3d Object. *That it is an Aſſault upon the Character of thoſe excellent Perſons who have defended Religion, by Arguments drawn from Nature and Reaſon,* p. 15

Anſw. 1. *All their Works are owing to the Light of Revelation: Why elſe do they write more clearly and conſiſtently than the Ancients?* ibid.

Among the Philoſophers no Knowledge, every thing Opinion, p. 17.

This appears from the infinite Diſſenſions and Contradictions among them, ibid.

2. *If Divine Truths are knowable by Reaſon, why did they not attain them with Certainty?* p. 18.

Miſtakes in Natural things do no harm, in Divine things are fatal, ibid.

They all lamented their Ignorance in Divine things, p. 19

Philoſophy always wavering, never agreed on Firſt Principles, p. 20

Pythagoras *on this account changed the Name of* Wiſe *to that of* Philoſopher, p. 22

The greateſt Difference between Reaſon in a State of Nature, and under Revelation, p. 23

4. Object. *That this throws an Imputation on the wiſer Heathens,* p. 24

Anſw. *Their higheſt Praiſe is, to have done all that was poſſible from the Light they had,* ibid.

We muſt examine them, to reject Error, and ſubſcribe to Truth, p. 25

Plato, Ariſtotle, *&c. had great Perfections, but as great Faults,* p. 25, 26

In religious Matters the Heathens did not conſult Men, but the Gods, p. 27

Their Ignorance confeſſed by all, even of Plato *by* Serranus, p. 29

When Thales, *&c. imported ſublimer Truths, the* Greeks *comprehended them not,* p. 30

Plato, *though ſo divine, recommends Idolatry and falſe Gods,* p. 31

Which muſt be owing to his Ignorance of the true Nature of things, ibid.

The Fear of Socrates's *Poiſon, an unworthy Apology, and a falſe one,* ibid.

The ſame Ignorance and Uncertainty in Cicero *as in others,* p. 32

They ſpake well as learned Men, but not as Divines, p. 33

The

The Weakneſs of Reaſon ſo deſcribed by Monſ. Perrot, *Mr.* Locke, *and Dr.* Clarke, *as effectually to deſtroy the very Suppoſition of Natural Light,* Page 34
The Teſtimony of Philoſophers muſt be admitted in favour of this Hypotheſis, as fully as in the behalf of others, Obſerv. 1. p. 38
No Philoſophers who lived after Chriſt, can with juſtice be appealed to, becauſe of the amazing Progreſs of Chriſtianity, and Inquiſitiveneſs of Philoſophers, who did ſtudy the Scriptures. Examples of it in Juſtin Martyr, *&c.* Obſerv. 2. p. 39
Convert Heathens charged the Pagans with borrowing from the Goſpels, p. 41
This made them ſet about the Reformation of Philoſophy, p. 42
Eſpecially Ammonius *at* Alexandria, p. 43
The Advantages of Alexandria *from the* Jews, *the Septuagint Verſion, and the Recourſe of the Learned of the Philoſophers in the Sacred Succeſſion,* p. 45
Their Views in blending Platoniſm with Chriſtianity, p. 46
They write ſublimer than their Predeceſſors, from having ſtudied in Chriſtian Schools, p. 47
Modern Infidelity, like the Ancients, learns from Scripture, but diſowns it, p. 49
The great Fallacy in ſuppoſing that all the Arguments we now perceive the Certainty of, might have been urged with equal ſtrength by a mere Philoſopher, p. 50
This Miſtake obſerved in the Author of The Religion of Nature Delineated, ibid.

CHAP. II.

Of the Inlets of Knowledge.

TO conſider Man as rational, and how he came to be ſo, 1ſt Point. Page 53
Reaſon even in this at a loſs, and knows not how to define Man, nor itſelf; what the different Operations of the Intellect are, p. 54
Men never agreed in any certain Rules to guide their Aſſent, or form their Judgment, ibid.
To conſider Man as a moral Creature; this from his Freedom and Choice of acting, 2d Point. p. 57
From the Intellect being conſcious of its Actions ariſes Conſcience, ibid.
Inlets of Knowledge, Reaſon divided concerning them, how many, and what they are, p. 58

First, Innate Ideas, *their Abſurdity*, &c. Page 59
Some Accounts given why the Ancients believed and taught ſuch Ideas, p. 60
Texts of Scripture on which ſome would ground ſuch Ideas explained, p. 62
The κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι *of the Heathen no more than Traditional Notices of things*, p. 65
So Socrates *and* Plato *ſeem to determine; and what is their Law of Fame*, p. 66
Epicurus *taught* Innate Ideas *to deceive the World*, p. 67
They are denied by all Learned Men, Pearſon, Puffendorf, Locke, &c. p. 68
Secondly, Inſtincts, *Theſe no Inlets of real Knowledge; and the Reaſons why*, p. 80.
Thirdly, Senſation, *The Inlet of all Knowledge either immediately by the Impreſſion of the Object, or mediately by the Uſe of Language and Inſtruction*, p. 84
No Materials in the Mind, but through the Senſes; therefore no Ideas from Self-reflexion, p. 87
The Mind a large Storehouſe, but no Furniture till brought into it, p. 89
No Ideas but of Senſation, p. 90
The Difference between Ideas and Notions, p. 92
No Ideas of Willing, Thinking, or the internal Operations of the Mind, p. 93
No Ideas of God, or ſpiritual Objects, but by Analogy, from ſenſible Ideas, p. 95
Inſtruction, *the only Inlet of Knowledge concerning God and Immaterial Beings*, ibid.
This no Degradation of Reaſon, p. 96
No Chain of Natural Cauſes to know God by his Works, p. 97
They who maintain it, forced to admit Innate Ideas, p. 102
The Mind has an innate Activity, but no innate Furniture, ibid.
That Inſtruction is the only Inlet of Divine Knowledge, proved from ſeveral Arguments, p. 103
First, *This Method alone is agreeable to the Proceedings of God*, p. 104
Language taught us by God, and Words neceſſary to make us Rational, and to think, ibid.
God gave Man Language to inſtruct him in Truths not cognizable by the Senſes, p. 106
Knowledge of God only from God; ſo all Antiquity agrees, p. 108

Man

Man could not give Names to unknown inviſible Beings, Page 116
Heathens held Divine Names to be of Divine Inſtitution, p. 112
2dly, *This Method is moſt agreeable to the Condition of Man,* p. 113
Heathens and Chriſtians confeſs Divine Knowledge to be from Inſtruction, p. 117
Education ſo neceſſary, that without it Man would not be rational, p. 119
3dly, *This alone is conſiſtent with Hiſtory, and the Account of things,* p. 122
All Learning from the Eaſt, and from Maſters, which is eaſily traced up to God, ibid.
4thly, *This accounts for all the great and monſtrous Defects in Philoſophy,* p. 126
They had the Names of things related to them, but not the Meaning of them, ibid.
The Ancients did not think Knowledge to be ſpun out of the Brain, but travelled in ſearch of it; and theſe underſtood the Nature of things beſt, p. 128
Fourthly, Self-reflexion, *the Impoſſibility of this being an Inlet of Knowledge, ſhewn through the preceding Diſſertation,* p. 131

CHAP. III.

Of the Law of Nature.

LAW of Nature, what to be underſtood by it, with the Definitions of it, Page 133
Moſt of our learned Divines ſpeak of it as if its Principles were innate, p. 143
Marks or Characters of it; it muſt be, 1ſt, *Univerſal,* 2dly, *Clear,* 3dly, *Perfect,* p. 145
What Nature can do, muſt be judged from what it has already done, 147
Maintainers of this Law make ſuch Conceſſions as effectually deſtroy it, p. 148
Author of The Religion of Nature Delineated, *conſidered,* p. 149
Many Objections lie againſt the Religion or Law of Nature, as now taught; 1ſt, *The Law of Reaſon cannot be more extenſive than the Faculty of Reaſon,* p. 151 Object. 1.

Object. 2. *No Principles can be admitted in Religion but what are evident,* Page 152
3. *Where Principles are clear, ſo will the Doctrines inferred from them be,* p. 153
4. *No Principles can be allowed to be univerſal, but what Experience proves to be ſo,* p. 154
5. *There can be no Law where there are no Motives to Obedience,* ibid.
That Natural Religion is liable to all theſe Objections, proved from Tillotſon *and* Clarke, p. 155
Law what, and the different kinds of it, p. 162
Human Laws not of themſelves obligatory, p. 163
Natural Law, the World not agreed in the Derivation of it, ibid.
1. *Some derive, and would infer the Neceſſity of it from the Rights of other Animals,* ibid.
2. *From the Cuſtoms of Nations, but the Mutability of theſe prevent their having the Force of Law,* p. 164
3. *Others derive it from the right uſe of Natural Reaſon; this ſtated at large,* p. 166
Reaſon, becauſe of its Uncertainty, cannot be Law, p. 169
But if ever ſo conſonant, could not be obligatory, p. 172
Neither on Individuals, who are equal, nor on ſuch collected into Society, ibid.
Nor laſtly, if formed into a regular Government, p. 174
4. *Others derive it from the Authority of God; all Obligation from the Will of a Superior,* p. 175
No Law, but the Will of one who has a juſt Right to demand Subjection, ibid.
All Sanctions of Law muſt be from ſuch Authority, p. 176
Actions being good or evil, depends on the Ordinance of the Supreme Law-maker, p. 176, 180
This Choice of Duty and Obedience conſtitutes Moral Goodneſs, p. 182
Heathens thought all Obligation of Law to be from the Gods, ibid.
Jews held the Precepts of Noah *to be the Natural Univerſal Law,* p. 185
Plato *derives all Laws from Tradition; hence their common Notions,* &c. p. 186, 187
All Heathens complained of wanting a better Light, p. 189
Reaſon receives no Degradation hereby, p. 191

Reason is the Faculty to receive, not discover divine Knowledge, Page 192
Its Use in Human Learning, p. 193
Its Use in Religion, which is a reasonable Service, p. 194
It cannot add to the original Stock of invisible Objects, p. 196
But may judge whether Doctrines be good and from God, p. 197
It can perceive Truth when proposed, but not find it out, p. 198
God, his Existence and being a Rewarder of them that seek him, the Foundation of all Religion, p. 202
Of Faith, and what the Ancients thought metaphysical or supernatural, p. 205
What Marks to ground our Faith or Belief of Revelation on, p. 206
Where those are, to refuse our Assent is unreasonable, p. 207
Nor is it any Objection, that we know not the whole of what God reveals, p. 208
Of the Trinity, Resurrection, &c. p. 209
To disbelieve what we cannot comprehend, the Ground of all Infidelity, ibid.
The Law of Nature supported by three Kinds of Arguments, 1st, *From Scripture*; 2dly, *From the Works of Creation*; 3dly, *From the Reasons of Things. These to be separately examined,* p. 213

CHAP. IV.

Texts of Scripture relating to the Natural Law. Of Natural Religion being learned from the Works of Creation. The Knowledge of God not to be had from the Contemplation of our own Frame. The Deity not discoverable from the Fitness of Things.

What Scripture affirms cannot be disbelieved, Page 215 Case stated.
Rom. i. 20, &c. Acts xiv. Acts xvii. *at large commented on, to* p. 249
Rom. ii. 14. *And Natural in the Sense of the Jews, and of the Heathen being a Law to themselves,* p. 251

But

But we learn from Scripture ſeveral Particulars relating to the Heathens, 1ſt, *That they did not know God*, Page 252
2dly, *That they could not know him by the Light of Nature*, p. 256
3dly, *That the Loſs of Divine Knowledge was owing to their own vain Reaſonings*, p. 257
Reaſon, which is the Inſtrument, to be conſidered as well as the Means, p. 269
The Standard of it to be taken from the Bulk of Mankind, ibid.
What Concluſions will thence neceſſarily follow, p. 271
The Weakneſs of it, the common Abilities of Men, and of the Vulgar, p. 274
Difficulty of attaining Knowledge, even to the wiſe, p. 280
The Condition of Man in a State of Nature conſidered, p. 295
Means of Natural Knowledge are ſaid to be, 1ſt, *The contemplating the Works of God in general*, ibid.
2dly, *The Frame of Man in particular*, p. 297
Firſt, Heathens knew not God by his Works, 1 Cor. i. 21. p. 301
No one can fix the Age when they came at ſuch natural Knowledge, p. 303
If we know not ſecond Cauſes, the Works cannot lead to the Workman, ibid.
The Greatneſs of the Works made them conclude every thing the Effect of viſible Cauſes, p. 304
No Tranſition from nothing to ſomething but by Omnipotence, p. 307
Creation no natural Proof of the Divine Exiſtence, none knew it, p. 308
Nor uſed in Scripture to prove the Being, but only the Greatneſs of God, p. 310
Several Texts of Scripture relating to this Subject conſidered, p. 311
No one ever thought Matter created; therefore no Scale of Beings to aſcend to God, p. 317
Pſalm xix. *and* Rom. i. 20. *explained*, p. 318, 319
Viſible Works of God led the World to Idolatry, p. 321
Eſpecially the Sun and Moon; whereby the Jews alſo were ſeduced, p. 323, 324
Plato *did not allow that they led Men to the Knowledge of God*, p. 324
What the Sun is to the Diſcernment of Viſibles, that God is to Inviſibles, p. 325

But

But tell Men there is a God, and the Works declare his Greatneſs, Page 326
So Zaleucus, Ariſtotle, *and* Cicero *apply them,* p. 327
No Proportion between God and his Works whereby he can be known, p. 329
Second Means. Man knew not God from contemplating his own Frame, p. 330
Could not know himſelf to be a Compound Being. Poſſidonius's *Sphere,* p. 332
Could never diſcover what Immateriality was, p. 334
Nor the Soul; not account how it thinks or acts on the Body, p. 336
Nor the Soul's Immortality, p. 337
Nor the Difference between the Souls of Men and Beaſts, p. 339
Ancients thought Beaſts rational, p. 340
Different Sentiments of the Moderns, p. 341
Third General Argument. *That Man could diſcover God from the Fitneſs,* &c. *of Things.*
The Syſtem of things great, but what none ever penetrated, p. 344
The Study full of Embarraſſments, what nonpluſs'd all the Ancients, p. 346
Variety of Phyſical Syſtems at preſent, therefore no Certainty, p. 347
Ancients greatly erred in the plaineſt Matters, p. 348
Grandeur of the Univerſe made them worſhip it, p. 349
Matter thought Eternal. Long before a Mind was introduced to order it, p. 350
Socrates *and* Cicero *confeſs the Impoſſibility of knowing Nature,* p. 350, 351
Job xxviii. *We cannot find out God by the Knowledge of Nature,* p. 352
But when God is declared, the Fitneſs, &c. *of things prove his Wiſdom,* &c. p. 353
Law or Moral Duties not to be inferred from the Fitneſs of things, ibid.
Doctrine of Morality ariſing from the Fitneſs of things ſtated, p. 354
The Reaſon of things, nothing but the Nature and Order which God gave them, p. 355
No Eternal Goodneſs but in God, p. 356
The Relations of created Beings not eternal, p. 357
No Explanation of the Degrees, Dependence, or Relations of things, p. 358

Many

Many Expreſſions uſed in this Controverſy profane and blaſphemous, Page 360
Attributes of God eſſentially the ſame, Will and Power not different, 360
The Force of Law not from the Nature of things, but from that Will which gave the Nature, p. 361
If God made things by Neceſſity, he cannot be a Free Agent, p. 362
Moral Dependence founded on Natural, and Natural on the Will of God, ibid.
If there be an Eternal Fitneſs of things, it muſt be antecedent to or coeval with the Will of God, p. 363
But this is impoſſible and falſe, for the Will of God is the Cauſe of all things, ibid.
The Truth of things is their Reaſon, and the only Reaſon of them is their being ſo willed of God, p. 364
If theſe Reaſons exiſted in God, they were nothing but the Eſſence of the Divine Nature, p. 365
If different from God, ſomething beſides him was Eternal, ibid.
Of Ideas, Exemplars, Archetypes, &c. *which are no more than Metaphyſical Enthuſiaſm,* p. 366
1ſt Object. *againſt this Doctrine is, That God affirms the contrary,* p. 368
2d Object. *That the Immutability of Relations is inconſiſtent with the Divine Proceedings,* p. 369
Relations have altered both in Angels and Men. State of Fallen Angels conſidered, ibid.
Between Men and Men, Men and Beaſts, Beaſts with Beaſts, p. 374
Whence new Duties, ſuch as Prayer, Repentance, &c. p. 375
3d Object. *This Doctrine does not give us a true Account of Morality,* p. 376
The Law of Moral Goodneſs muſt be perfect, but Reaſon is not, p. 377
Not Reaſon, but the Will of God the Meaſure of Good and Evil, p. 378
Moral Goodneſs conſiſts in chooſing an Action becauſe we know it is our Duty, p. 379
4. Object. *Fitneſs,* &c. *not a Means to arrive at the Knowledge of Divine things,* p. 381
Becauſe Reaſon could neither judge of ſuch Fitneſs, nor of Good or Evil, p. 382
5. Object. *Relations of things were never ſuppoſed to induce an Obligation,* p. 386
All Law and Obligation muſt be from a ſuperior Being, p. 388

Law,

Law, whether Natural, Moral, or Positive, has its Goodness from the Will of God, Page 388
This acknowledged by the Jews and Heathens, Cicero, &c. p. 389-392
Of common Notions, said to be congruous to Nature, &c. *all given by God.* p. 390

CHAP. V.

God not to be defined nor demonstrated; therefore not discoverable by Reason.

KNowledge is a suitable Idea or Notion in the Mind of the Object, Page 395
First, Therefore God not to be known, because not to be defined, p. 397
He is best known by negative Descriptions, p. 399
Secondly, There was no Name to inquire after God by, ibid.
Therefore Man must set about comprehending he knows not what, p. 400
Or what he knows to be incomprehensible, p. 402
This made the Philosophers ascribe such inconsistent Properties to God, p. 403
Thales, Plato, &c. *confess Divine things to be unintelligible,* p. 404
Thirdly, There is no ascending from Effects to the First Cause, p. 406
Heathens never could or did conceive an Incorporeity, ibid.
Fourthly, There is no Likeness or Analogy to pass from Visibles to Invisibles, p. 407
The pretended intellectual Scale for the Mind to ascend by, unnatural and visionary, p. 408, 409
The atheistical Objection answered, if all Knowledge be from Sensation, every thing is subject to Sense, p. 411
To a Man in a State of Nature, no Rule but that of Contraries, p. 412
He must believe every thing contradictory to his Senses, ibid.
All Heathens acknowledged the Want of an Instructor, p. 414
Plato *every where diffident,* 415. *His Resemblance of the World to Men in a Cave,* p. 417

So were Simonides, Cicero, *and all the Philoſophers,* Page 419
They knew not the Creator, Beginning, Intent, or End of Man, p. 420
No Demonſtration of God; the Reaſons for it, p. 422
Except Moral Demonſtration, p. 424
The Diſadvantages in pretending to any other Certainty, p. 427
The Embarraſſments even of Moral Certainty, p. 428
Of thoſe who ſay, Revelation is only a thing by the by, to ſave Labour and Trouble, p. 430
Reliance upon Reaſon has in all Ages produced Error and Atheiſm, p. 432
Becauſe Reaſon and all its Syſtems have ever been fallible and falſe, p. 433
The Immortality of the Soul not to be demonſtrated; therefore neither is God, p. 435
Concluſion, p. 437

ERRATA.

Page 78. line 4. for *either* read *their*
Page 93. l. 31. for *other* read *our*
Page 132. l. 7. after *innate* dele all "
Page 141. continue " to the End of the Paragraph
Page 191. l. 7. for *their* r. *its*
Page 192. l. 30. dele *that*
Page 197. l. 17. after *Reaſon* inſert *does it follow*
Page 279. l. 20. for *him* r. *them*
Page 297. l. 19. after *Privation* inſert *and*
Page 333. l. 19. after *may not* inſert *only*
Page 379. l. 10. dele " to the end of the Paragraph
Page 382. l. 8. for *Man* r. *Men*
Page 387. l. 15. for *renew* r. *renounce*
Page 396. l. 22. for its r. *his*

INTRO-

INTRODUCTION.

IN theſe latter Ages, two Religions, that of the Heathens, and that of Nature, have been the Subject of Contemplation, in an equal, if not greater Degree than the Chriſtian.

Concerning the former, *Natalis Comes*, Lord *Herbert*, and others endeavoured to explain, and dreſs it up in a modern Faſhion, and exhibit it to the World as a conſiſtent and rational Scheme of Worſhip: And the Reaſon why this happy Diſcovery had not been made ſooner, was, it ſeems, becauſe no one before them *had ever conſidered more than the Shell of the Fable*; mankind had taken it in the groſs for an abſurd irrational Syſtem, without being able to diſcern or unfold the ſublime and myſterious Doctrines contained in it: For Paganiſm is like a Diamond out of the Quarry, where ineſtimable Beauties and Riches are concealed from the ignorant Eye, under a rough and uſeleſs exterior Coat. This they undertook to poliſh, to pare away the Superfluities, and then ſhew the internal Worth and Excellency of the Gentile Religion, or at leaſt make it appear to be *not altogether ſo abſurd and ſtupid, as had hitherto been generally imagined.* Nat. Com.

The firſt thing to be done, in order to remove the common prejudices conceived againſt it, and to clear away

away the vaſt heap of Rubbiſh and Confuſion, was to provide a number of Claſſes, into which the different Materials might be ſorted, that whatever could not be juſtly accounted for under one Head, might bear a tolerable Conſtruction in another; and be called either Myſtical, Symbolical, Allegorical, Hiſtorical, Poetical, Fabulous, Natural, Civil, Moral, Eſoterical, Exoterical, or the Peculiar Placit of the Legiſlator, Theologiſt, Poet or Philoſopher, as was moſt agreeable to the Opinion, Humour or Prejudice, or beſt ſuited the Turn of the Interpreter and Mythologiſt; in which they had a Right to uſe the moſt unbounded Liberty: Becauſe without ſuch Latitude it would be impoſſible to remove the Crowd of monſtrous and ridiculous Fictions, with which Truth was perplexed; to account for thoſe cruel and horrid, thoſe ſhameful and impure Rites, that made up ſo great a Part of their Religion; or to reconcile thoſe Contradictions which ſo manifeſtly appear in the Theology of the Ancients.

But after all this Labour in ſeparating and diſtinguiſhing, the moſt notorious Articles in their Faith and Practice were ſo villainous, extravagant, and ſuperſtitious, as not to be reduced under any of the former Heads, and yet without being properly diſpoſed of, muſt have ruined the whole Deſign: Therefore for all theſe, that is, for the Bulk of Religion, they provided a common Storehouſe, and called it Prieſtcraft: For it ſeems whoever were initiated into that Order, had but one common View, *to impoſe upon the ſtupid Credulity of Mankind, who always gave the Characters of moſt profound Theologiſts, to ſuch as had moſt perverted them from the Rules of Right Reaſon; and the poor wretched Populace had neither Courage nor Will to ſuſpect all this ſuperſtition and juggling doings of the Prieſts.*

Ld. Herbert.

Prieſts as adulterate, nor to reject them as ſuch. Nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange, that the Prieſts had ſuch an Aſcendency over the Minds of others; for in *Egypt*, the moſt ancient School of Learning and Religion, they were always choſen out of the Nobility, employed in ſtudying the liberal Arts and Sciences, and advanced to the higheſt Offices and Places of Preferment in the State. The fooliſh *Athenians* eſtabliſhed the ſame Cuſtom, for the better Government (as they thought) of Religion and the Commonwealth; and *Numa* imprudently fell into the like Error, by making a Law, that none ſhould be elected Prieſts, but who were above fifty Years of Age, and excelled others in Birth and Virtue. Theſe were the Men, the greateſt, the wiſeſt, and the beſt, who debauched the Minds, and introduced ſo many Profanations into the pure Religion of the Heathens. Diod. Sic.

To ſuch Shifts will the Defence of a bad Cauſe carry Men; Prieſtcraft is made an Anſwer to every thing, a Charm to unty all thoſe knotty Difficulties, that Hiſtory and avowed Facts would otherwiſe perplex them with. And however coarſe a Compliment it may be to the reſt of Mankind, yet it has been found neceſſary to maintain, that for 2000 Years together, the Prieſts impoſed on all the Inhabitants of the Earth; that they could make the whole World dance conſtant Attendance to their Temples and Oracles, at the Expence of numerous, coſtly, and impertinent Ceremonies; could perſuade Nations to leave their Country, and Kings and Princes as well as People, in ſpite of all the Reluctancies of Nature, to ſacrifice their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils, and think it meritorious to do ſo; and that all the Prieſts ſucceſſively were ſo much the ſame, ſo ſtanch in Blood and Secrecy, that in this vaſt Tract of Time, none could find in their Hearts to relent or betray the Impoſture; this ſuperlative Craft was above the

Reach of Emperors, Stateſmen, or the wiſeſt Philoſophers, that is, the whole World (except the Prieſts) was all this time perfectly beſotted.

Another great Prejudice againſt the Orthodoxy of Heatheniſm, was the Writings of the primitive Chriſtians, Men eminent for Learning and Piety, moſt of them Pagans by Birth as well as Profeſſion, educated in all their Wiſdom, and thoroughly acquainted with their Faith and Practice: And ſo it happened, theſe Fathers repreſented Paganiſm as an irrational and deteſtable Heap of Iniquity, what had more of Phrenzy than of Piety in it; they charge the World with the utmoſt Stupidity and Idolatry, that they neither knew nor worſhipped the true God, but ſuch as were no Gods at all, the wickedeſt and the worſt of Men; that they transferred divine Honours from the only Supreme Being, to the Images of dead Carcaſes, to Natural Things, and the Works of their own Hands; that the Gods of the Nations were Devils, and that there could be no Religion among them, ſince their very Gods were the Patrons of all Impurity and Impiety: And ſo intolerably bold were theſe old Gentlemen, as to challenge their Enemies to publick Diſputes on theſe very Points; to enter their Appeals to the Emperors, Senate, and People; to diſperſe their Apologies, and triumph in their Victories; yet were never upbraided with repreſenting Heatheniſm in a falſe Light, or oppoſing ſuch Doctrines as the World did not believe and practiſe.

Ld. Herbert.

To remove this Objection, *The Fathers of the Church are ſaid to be inveterate Enemies to the Heathens, and to have repreſented the Matter quite otherwiſe than it is; for they paſs by the more certain and orthodox Part of their Religion, (their Piety, Faith, Hope, and Love) in Silence, and from their Superſtitions and Rites take an Occaſion to utter ſevere Invectives againſt them, and repreſent them after a moſt*

a moſt ridiculous Manner, by ingeniouſly expoſing their mad ſacred Rites; for what the Prieſts did as if they were in a Rapture and inſpired with a divine Spirit, they repreſented as the Effects of Lunacy and Diſtraction: As alſo, when they bitterly inveighed againſt them for worſhipping deified Men, they impoſed on their Readers, and miſtook the Senſe of the Heathens about the Word God, *for that a deified Man ſignifies no more among the Heathens, than a glorified Saint does among the Chriſtians.* That notwithſtanding the conſtant Imputation of their worſhipping falſe Gods, by the Prophets under the Old Teſtament, or the Apoſtles and Martyrs under the New, yet this is the unjuſteſt Accuſation in the World: For the ancient Religion was Symbolical, and whatever Veneration they offered to the Heaven, Sun, Moon, or Stars, it terminated in the Worſhip of the Supreme God, and directly tended to the Advancement of his Glory; and in all their holy Rites there was a religious and myſtical Senſe couched under them, which whoever will accurately examine, and dive into the Scope and Deſign of them, will eaſily diſcover, and without this Interpretation the Heathens would be the moſt ridiculous and abſurd of Mortals: Yet *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſ.* ſays, *This is a Wiſdom and Judgment which few are Maſters of.* And how does this laſt Account agree with what the ſame Authors teach of the Impoſture and Villany of Prieſtcraft, if there be nothing in Paganiſm but what is wonderful myſterious and divine?

We are alſo told, that the Falſity of the Accuſation proceeded from an original Miſtake, in believing that the Heathens maintained a Plurality of Gods, which they did not do (as being repugnant to the Laws of Nature) but acknowledged one only God. In the Contemplation however of this one infinite Being, as they obſerved his Virtue and Power to be diffuſed through every thing, ſo, according to the Variety of Effects, providential

Diſpenſations, and known Attributes, they gave different Names at ſeveral Times and Places to theſe Virtues; whence it is inferred as an undoubted Truth, that all the Powers of the other Gods, however diſperſed through every Element, proceed as ſo many Streams from the ſame Fountain, and terminate in one *Jupiter*, which *Jupiter* is no other than the true God; accordingly if they worſhipped a Statue, the Act of Religion was not directed to the Statue, but the Hero it repreſented; if a Hero, not him, but the Star which bore the ſame Name, or into which he was tranſlated; if the Stars, not them, but the God which preſided over them, for otherwiſe the Idolatry would be inexcuſable.

Having thus prepared the Minds of Men for a candid Reception of Paganiſm, the Mask is taken off, and the Sum of the Enquiry drawn up in a few Concluſions. The firſt is, that the Heathens agreed with Chriſtians, not only in worſhipping the ſame Supreme God, and common Father, but with the ſame Piety and Virtue, the ſame moſt principal and eſſential kind of Worſhip; and the Challenge of *Celſus* is produced, to ſhew what was in the Chriſtian Religion that tended to the eſtabliſhing of Virtue, more than what the Heathens had before acknowledged. The Second is, That ſince the Heathens had by right Reaſon diſcovered an univerſal Religion, with all the proper Means to attain eternal Happineſs, it will neceſſarily follow, that Mankind did not ſtand in need of any particular Revelation, or Inſtruction from God, to that great End: For this is the whole Driſt of painting Heatheniſm in thoſe amiable Colours, to ſhew that no other Aſſiſtance is wanting, than what Nature by the Uſe of Reaſon has afforded us, to form a pure and perfect Religion, ſufficient to all the Ends of Virtue and Happineſs. It is true indeed, that Guilt ſometimes flies in the Face of theſe Gentlemen, and they acknowledge it to be impoſſible *for the Heathens to acquit themſelves of the Suſ-*

Suſpicion of Idolatry, or even the Practice of it; but even in this are they juſtifiable: *For why might not they embrace the Faith, and thoſe Rites they received from their Anceſtors, as well as we have done? And they are not to be blamed for approving thoſe things, which had through ſo long a Tract of time been delivered down to them.* To omit the Blaſphemy of ſuch Compariſons and Aſſertions; how came it to paſs that Reaſon or Nature did not prevent the Ancients from miſtaking rank Idolatry for Religion; or through ſo many Ages could not ſhew their Poſterity the Folly and Impiety of it? Or is it a Law of Nature, that the Worſhip of falſe Gods is a proper and acceptable Service to the true One? Ld. Herbert.

But in the middle of the laſt Century appeared a far nobler School, which carried on a freer Enquiry into the Law of Nature, than had ever yet been done, and urged it with great Strength againſt the Scepticiſm and Infidelity of the Times, by proving the Agreeableneſs of revealed Religion to the unqueſtionable Dictates of right Reaſon; and thereby recommended Chriſtianity with great Advantage, as being a moſt reaſonable Service, and beſt adapted to all the Inclinations, Hopes, and Wiſhes of a rational Creature.

Had the Enquiry ſtopped here, it would have been of the utmoſt Service to the Cauſe of Truth and Virtue; but it was gradually carried on to unwarrantable Lengths; the Religion and the Law of Nature were ſet up as independent of, and even in oppoſition to Revelation: The Importance of Morality was extolled as ſuperior to the Doctrines and Duties of Chriſtianity; moral Duties were ſaid to have a natural or eternal Obligation, but poſitive ones to be mere arbitrary Commands, void of all internal Excellency; the Light of Reaſon was cried up as ſufficient to the Diſcovery of the Will of God, and the whole Duty of Man, to a diſtinct Knowledge of Good and Evil, *i. e.* every thing that was neceſſary

neceſſary for him to do, or not to do, without any ſupernatural Aſſiſtance. Theſe Studies happened to ſuit with the Genius, and took up the Attention of the Age, and ſince then have been the principal Subjects of Contemplation to our Univerſities, Philoſophers and Divines: The Preſs abounded with Treatiſes of Natural Divinity, Light of Nature, Law of Nature, Natural Religion, Rational Theology, Chriſtian Theology compared with Platoniſm: So alſo, of Moral Theology, Moral Philoſophy, Chriſtian Moral Philoſophy, Chriſtian Ethicks, and of all the Duties which Men might know, and ſhould be obliged to practiſe, were there no ſuch thing as external Revelation. From the Pulpit, Morality has been earneſtly recommended, and Chriſtianity but coolly regarded; much ſaid of the Light of Reaſon, the eternal Fitneſs, and immutable Obligation of Things; but little of the Goſpel Means of Salvation, of Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs, of Sanctification and Redemption; as if Chriſtianity could not be ſupported but by the Law of Nature; or the Text of the Apoſtle not become a Rule of Duty, till proved to agree with the Opinion of the Philoſopher. So that the pious and judicious Laity have long complained, that Revelation and Divinity are almoſt forgot amongſt us.

And the Conſequences of theſe Doctrines have at laſt appeared in a very fatal Manner. Firſt, by throwing ſo much weight into the Scale of Reaſon, ſo little into that of Revelation, as if every one had a Right to model a Religion for himſelf; the Libertines of the Age have taken occaſion to deſpiſe the Authority of Scripture, to look upon its Precepts as ſuperſtitious or unneceſſary, to remove all thoſe Terrors which brought any Reſtraint upon their corrupt ſenſual Gratifications, and by leſſening the Expectation of that Glory which ſhall be revealed, indulge with greater Security their beloved Vices in the preſent Enjoyment of Senſe; by which Means the great

great Motives of Religion (which are not to be demonſtrated from mere Reaſon) have loſt their due and proper Influence on the Minds of Men. And notwithſtanding the loud Pretences to Morality, the End of their Arguments and Practice is to teach us, that there is no Neceſſity *to live ſoberly, righteouſly, or godly in this preſent World.* Secondly, we have lived to ſee Infidelity join iſſue in theſe very Doctrines, and from the avowed Tenets of modern Divines, raiſe ſuch Objections againſt the Neceſſity or Expediency of Revelation, as neither have been, nor upon thoſe Principles can be anſwered.

A thorough Conviction however, that this is the true State of things amongſt us, that Heatheniſm and the Law of Nature have been carried much farther than Truth will bear, and that by this Means the Canon of Faith hath been perverted, and many Errors and Corruptions entred into the Church of God, was the ſole Reaſon of putting the following Sheets together, and is now the beſt Apology for offering them to the Publick; and if by the Hypotheſis herein maintained, Religion may be reſtored to its Original Authority, without any Debaſement of Reaſon; if the Cavils of Libertines are hereby totally enervated, and the Objections of Infidelity meet with a full and eaſy Solution: If throughout, it be conſiſtent with itſelf, with all the known Laws of Nature and Reaſon, and above all with the Proceedings of Almighty God with Man, it will deſerve a ſerious Conſideration before it be ſuperciliouſly condemned, or magiſterially rejected.

It is very certain that the Importance of the Subject loſes much of its Dignity from the Manner of treating it; but Truth will bear Examination in the plaineſt Dreſs, and if by this Attempt Occaſion be given to excite ſome abler Hand to bring it to due Perfection, it will be of ſervice to Religion, which is all I aim at or can hope for. That there are many Defects in the enſuing Treatiſe, the Publiſher is very ſenſibly convinced,

vinced, which he would not have imputed to the Subject, but to the Diſadvantages he perſonally labours under. Such as,

1*ſt*, A long Diſuſe to thoſe Studies which accuſtom the Mind to a ſolid Method of Reaſoning and Concluding; and which a Country Retirement, embarraſſed with the Cares of Life, almoſt neceſſarily diſable it from exerciſing; and therefore is perſuaded that many of the Arguments are capable of being put in a ſtronger Light, than that in which they are here offered.

2*dly*, The being furniſhed with a moderate Number of Books (and too many of them Tranſlations) without Opportunity of conſulting publick Libraries or Originals: If therefore ſome ſmall Miſtakes may have happened, he begs proper Allowances from the Criticks for them; but perſuades himſelf that there are none that can any way affect the ſubject Matter in Queſtion.

But, 3*dly*, A Senſe of theſe Diſadvantages, and the Want of Guides to follow in this Inquiry (none who profeſſedly treat of it having fallen into his Hands) determined him to make uſe of all the Helps he could meet with from the beſt Authors; not only to borrow Hints from them, but to tranſcribe their Arguments and Words, when ſuitable to his purpoſe. He is not therefore afraid of being thought a Plagiary, but deſires that if any thing valuable occurs, it may be aſcribed to them; if any thing weak or imperfect, to himſelf.

Laſtly, As he has nothing in view but Truth, his ſincere Wiſhes are, that whatever is built upon falſe Principles, may ſoon come to nothing and be forgot. Above all, as there is no Inſtruction or Knowledge in Divine Truths, but from the only ſure Rule of Faith, the Word of God; if any thing herein contained be in the leaſt contrary thereto, he revokes it, diſannuls it, and unſays it.

The

The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature.

CHAP. I.

The Enquiry ſtated, and Objections anſwered.

THE Perfection of our Rational Nature is true Wiſdom, and the Perfection of Wiſdom is Religion, which conſiſts in the Knowledge of God and of Ourſelves; in Virtue and Obedience, in a well-grounded Peace of Mind, and the comfortable Hopes of a bleſſed Immortality: And that ſuch Wiſdom can only proceed from the Author of our Beings, is a Fundamental both in Divinity and Philoſophy.

But as God has in divers manners ſpoken to us; an Enquiry ariſes, by what Method he has vouchſafed to communicate to Mankind the Knowledge of *Divine Things*, or thoſe which concern his Exiſtence, Nature, Perfections, and Will, and direct us to the Attainment of our final End, and ultimate Happineſs. Therefore by Divine Things I underſtand the great Principles of all Religion, which may be comprized under the following Heads. The

Exiſtence of a Deity, and his eſſential Attributes. That Worſhip which is becoming, and due to ſuch an infinite Being. The Immortality of the Soul. And a State of Rewards and Puniſhments after this Life.

And allowing that ſome Men, eſpecially the moſt wiſe and judicious in all Nations and Ages, have entertain'd a Belief of theſe great Truths; yet the Method by which they received the firſt Notices of them, cannot by any direct or neceſſary Conſequence be thence inferred. So that pious and learned Men are not agreed by what Inlet or Means of Conveyance ſuch Notions and Apprehenſions of remote, inviſible, and ſpiritual Objects entred the Minds of Men.

Moſt of the Opinions on this Subject, may be reduced to theſe three.

Firſt, That we come at this Knowledge by innate Ideas; or having the Law and Rule of Life written and engraven on our Hearts, in ſuch plain viſible Characters, that whoever looks into himſelf will clearly diſcern the great Principles and Duties of Religion, and the ſeveral Obligations he thereby lies under to Obedience: This the Lord *Herbert*, and others have maintained.

Secondly, That Man by a due uſe of Reaſon, and contemplating the viſible Works of Creation and Providence, may come at the Knowledge of God, his Duty, *&c.* without any external Aid or Inſtruction: which Opinion is defended, not only by Deiſts, but all thoſe who teach a Religion and Law of Nature, independent on, and attainable without Revelation.

Thirdly, That the Knowledge of theſe ſupernatural Truths had no other Conveyance but that of Revelation, or thoſe Diſcoveries which God has made of his Nature and Will to Mankind, without which they muſt for ever have remained ignorant of them.

them. And that thoſe Communications which God made to *Adam*, *Noah*, and the Patriarchs, were, by traditional Conveyance from one Generation to another, the ſole ground of divine Knowledge to the heathen World; and the Precepts thereof ſtyled by them, Right Reaſon, the Natural, Common, and Univerſal Law.

And this laſt Opinion ſeems to me moſt agreeable to Scripture, Reaſon, Hiſtory, and Truth; and what therefore I intend to explain and ſupport in the following Treatiſe. But as I am ſenſible it is a Task of great Difficulty, and not hitherto profeſſedly treated of; as alſo liable to many Prejudices from the Favourers of the ſecond Hypotheſis, at preſent almoſt univerſally eſtabliſhed: I ſhall firſt endeavour to remove ſome Objections, which ſeem moſt naturally to lie againſt it.

I. It may be ſaid, that it is introducing Novelties into Religion, and thereby diſturbing the Peace of it.

II. That it is invalidating thoſe Arguments drawn from Reaſon and Nature, which have been urged with ſuch Succeſs againſt the Attacks of Scepticiſm and Infidelity.

III. That it is an Aſſault upon the Characters of thoſe many excellent Perſons, who have defended Religion by Arguments deduced from the Religion of Nature.

IV. That it is depriving the Ancients of that Praiſe, which through ſo many Ages has been juſtly attributed to them; for thoſe ſublime Sentiments of Virtue and refined Syſtems of Morality they taught the World.

From Imputations of the *Firſt* kind it is natural to ſeek for ſhelter under the Cover of ſome great Authorities; the Fathers, Councils, or the Judgments of ſome learned Men. I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with producing three or four Names

only, but in weight equal to many. Thoſe are *Grotius* and *Puffendorf* abroad, *Barrow* and *Tillotſon* at home.—The Firſt, proving the Being of God from the Conſent of all Nations, ſays, "This can be "from no other Cauſe, than either a Declaration of "God himſelf, or a Tradition derived from the "firſt Parents of Mankind: If we admit the former, the thing in queſtion is granted; and if we "affirm the latter, there can no good Reaſon be "given why we ſhould believe theſe Firſt Parents "did deliver a Falſhood to their Poſterity, in a "matter of the greateſt moment." *Puffendorf* ſays, "It is very probable that the chief Heads of "Natural Law were expreſly deliver'd by God Almighty to the firſt Mortals, and were from them "communicated to others by Cuſtom and Inſtitution." Dr. *Barrow*, among the ſeveral Proofs for the Being of a God, urges this, "That it might, "from ſome common Fountain of Inſtruction "(from one ancient Maſter, or one primitive Tradition) be conveyed, as from one common Head "or Source, into many particular Conduits." And the laſt, ſpeaking of the Unity of the Divine Nature, ſays, "It is a Notion wherein the greateſt and "the wiſeſt Part of Mankind did always agree; "and therefore may reaſonably be preſumed to be "either natural, or to have ſprung from ſome original Tradition delivered down to us from the "Firſt Parents of Mankind."

De Veritat. &c. L. 1. c. 1.

Leg. Nat. L. 2. c. 3. § 20.

Vol. II. Fol. p. 116.

Vol. I. Fol. p. 568.

So that in the opinion of Perſons eminent for Judgment and Learning, theſe important Truths might be conveyed by Tradition through ſucceſſive Ages of the World; and that according to the ſeveral Degrees of Light Mankind received, they would reaſon concerning them with greater or leſs Advantage: And conſequently ſuch Hypotheſis may be not only rational but probable, becoming the Divine Attributes to have acted by, conſiſtent with

all

all the known Laws of Reaſon and Religion, and the Cauſe of Virtue be ſo far from ſuffering, that it may receive many corroborative Proofs and Illuſtrations from it.

As to Chriſtian Peace, the only Bond thereof is the Unity of Faith; and as Truth can be but one, it is what all ought to ſearch and pray for; when that is our ſincere Aim, and carried on in a Spirit of Meekneſs, the Endeavour, tho' unſucceſsful, will not be condemned by the ſober and judicious Part of Mankind; eſpecially in an Enquiry, where there is no breaking down the ſacred Incloſures, nor rooting up ancient Foundations; but only a different Method of inveſtigating the ſame thing, and intended to lead us up to the ſame Divine Original. The Laws of Revelation and Nature, all Knowledge both in Heaven and Earth, is from the ſame Fountain of Wiſdom, the Father of Angels and Men, who always ſhines with a ſtrong unchangeable Light: And to aſcribe the Informations we have of the Divine Attributes and Will to his own immediate Manifeſtations, cannot detract from, but muſt rather add to the Characters of infinite Mercy, as well as Glory.

All his Creatures are intended for Happineſs, and muſt have ſufficient Means granted to attain it, which if the Author of our Being has not done, by any clear Impreſſion on our intellectual Faculty, nor given us conſtant and ordinary natural Abilities unerringly to do it: Then an immediate Revelation of the Means and End muſt be conſonant to thoſe Ideas we neceſſarily form of Infinite Goodneſs, highly agreeable to the Expectations and reaſonable Deſires of his Creatures, and conſequently ſuitable, fit, and proper to Divine Righteouſneſs and Wiſdom, as well as the Imperfections and the Wants of Men.

They who maintain the contrary muſt ſay, the Impreſſions on our Mind are ſo ſtrong, that no one,

without ſome natural Impediment, can be ignorant or miſtaken in his Duty; whence this Abſurdity will follow, that Man by Nature is more able to know than he is to perform; can make a Law, but not fulfil it: Or that the Book of Creation is ſo plain and legible, as to direct an ordinary Capacity, with due Application, to Truth and Happineſs; and unaſſiſted Reaſon can inſtruct us in a Worſhip ſuitable, and well-pleaſing to the Deity. Becauſe otherwiſe Man would have an End, but not the Means, which is contrary to all the Ideas we can conceive of God. Both theſe Poſitions ſhall be conſidered; and if it appear, that Reaſon never did furniſh Men with juſt Apprehenſions of Divine Things, nor exhibit a tolerable Body of Laws, as a Rule of Life, what Mankind ought, or ought not to do; we muſt have recourſe to ſome ſupernatural Means, for the obtaining what Nature or Reaſon could not afford them.

Another Argument in favour of this Hypotheſis, may be drawn from the Nature of Religion in general, which conſiſts in juſt Apprehenſions of the true God, and the Performance of ſuch Worſhip as will procure his Favour and Acceptance. For the Being of God is the only Foundation of Morality as well as Divinity; and, according to the Apprehenſions we have of his Excellencies and Perfections, ſuch will our Notions even of moral Duties be. For the Obligation of all Religion, call it Natural, Moral, or Revealed, muſt be deduced from the Exiſtence of God; and the Admirableneſs of its Precepts, from the Divine Nature and Perfections. Whence it will undeniably follow, that whatever Syſtem beſt inſtructs us in the Being and Nature of God, his eſſential Attributes and Perfections, his Providence, Works and Will, and eſtabliſhes them on the moſt ſolid Foundations, that is the ſureſt Pillar of Morality as well as Faith, becauſe all their Duties, with the Eternity, Neceſſity, Fitneſs, and Relations of them,

Bp. *Wilkins.*

them, muſt be thence derived with a greater Truth and Certainty.

But where has Reaſon given us any rational coherent Syſtem of the Divine Nature, his Self-Exiſtence, Attributes, and Will, able to make Men good here, or happy hereafter? A Syſtem in which there is nothing inconſiſtent with Truth or with itſelf, no inextricable Difficulties and Abſurdities that ſhock a well-informed Mind, and overthrow that Being and Providence it would eſtabliſh? If Reaſon has not done this, it could never teach a complete ſteady Rule of Moral Righteouſneſs. And becauſe it has not done it, the ableſt Defenders of Natural Religion are forc'd to make large Apologies for its many Defects and narrow Extent; acknowledging that Reaſon is too glimmering a Light to make a full Diſcovery of ſacred Matters; that it is a Guide, of itſelf not able to direct or lead its Followers right, but often plunges them ſo deep in Error and Corruption, that they find an inſuperable Difficulty to extricate themſelves; that it not only renders every Step they take full of danger, but if they are not very wary in ſo thick a Darkneſs, moſt certainly proves deſtructive to them. Yet the ſame Authors allow, that whatever Senſe the Heathens had of God, his Will, or their Duty, they had it from the Light of Nature only; and to this are owing the manifold Defects of ancient Theology.

But is not this confeſſing Reaſon to be a blind Guide, unable to direct us to Happineſs, and therefore it is Prudence to look out for another? Is it not to meaſure the Moral Law of eternal Rectitude, by a broken, crooked, and unequal Rule, whilſt we have in our hands a plain unerring one, whereby all the Doubts that confounded the Philoſophers, vaniſh and diſappear, their Miſtakes are corrected, and the abſtruſe Notions which they could never reconcile, plainly accounted for. And this done in

that ſtrong convictive manner, as to ſatisfy the Mind, and engage our Belief to reſt an eternal Intereſt thereon. The Difficulty alſo ſtill remains, it being impoſſible to prove, the Heathens had the little they knew of Divine Things from Reaſon only; it is what they abſolutely diſavowed; nor ever admitted an Article of Religion, but from a Perſuaſion, that it was communicated to them by the Gods, or the Sons of the Gods, who were beſt able to give an account of what related to themſelves, and it was impious to diſpute or deny what they declared.—This is more than ſome Chriſtians will allow; but whether they will or not, Revelation has theſe two Advantages; that it is as capable of Proof as any other Subject, that is, as much as the Nature of the thing will admit, and Reaſon cannot demand more; and that when any thing is proved to be the Will of the Supreme Being, Reaſon is ſilenced, and Arguments are at an end. It is the Awe of the latter, that makes Infidelity cavil ſo much at the former.

The Second OBJECTION is, That this Hypotheſis invalidates thoſe Arguments drawn from Reaſon and Nature, which have been urged with ſuch Succeſs againſt Scepticiſm and Infidelity.

To which I anſwer, That this is the very Subject of Debate, whether ſuch Arguments were drawn from Reaſon, or are not entirely owing to Revelation: Therefore I ſhall only obſerve here, that the attributing them to Revelation, does by no means exclude all thoſe Benefits of Reaſon, which God and Nature intended, or judge the Advantages thereof unneceſſary; as to aſcribe more to it, is neither neceſſary nor rational. They are both the Gifts of the Father of Lights, Rays of that all-glorious Sun, who communicates his Beams of Brightneſs to every Creature, according to its reſpective Condition, and the Nature of its Being: both intended to excellent, but different Purpoſes. The one lays the Foundation

dation of Obedience to the Deity, the other enforces and defends it. Revelation exhibits the Principles and Duties of Religion, and binds the Obligation on our Souls, from the Conſideration of God's Greatneſs, our own Immortality, and the Certainty of a Future State, Motives which Reaſon could not ſuggeſt. Then Reaſon, by its own ſtricteſt Rules and Laws, can prove, that all theſe are highly agreeable to the Dictates of Nature, fit and becoming all the Apprehenſions we can form of an eternal infinite Being; adapted to all the Ends of Providence and Wiſdom, beſt calculated to our trueſt Expectations and Wiſhes of Happineſs, whether preſent or future, and that every thing in Religion is amiable and perfective. This is the proper Employment of Reaſon, and when uſed to theſe Purpoſes, is of the greateſt Service and Advantage to Mankind.

But when it is made the Author and Foundation of Religion, appealed to as an infallible Director and Evidence, the Meaſure and Judge of Truth both Human and Divine, and nothing to be admitted but what ſhe notifies and explains: This is perverting the Order of Things, and tranſgreſſing thoſe Bounds which God and Nature have appointed to it. For as the Supreme Being preſerves and directs all his Works to the End for which he created them, ſo he does it by the wiſeſt Counſels and unalterable Laws. There is a Line which no created Underſtanding can paſs, and whatever Faculties are given to a Being, muſt neceſſarily be confined within certain Limits, and their Operations proportioned to their eſſential State, according to the Maxim in Philoſophy, *that what is received is proportioned to the Capacity of the Subject that receives it.* The Angels Nature is vaſtly more intellectual than ours, and yet they veil their Faces, can neither know nor comprehend the Glories of the Uncreated One.

Yet

Yet Men will not, in the Things of God, truſt to God's Authority; they muſt examine them by Reaſon, and try them by the Laws of Philoſophy, as the only Criterion to judge of Truth by: If they don't anſwer this Scrutiny, if we cannot graſp the Nature of them (tho' ſuch as no human Sight can pierce) or want Arguments to eſtabliſh them, we muſt ſuſpend our Belief, or reject them. Whereas, for Creatures of ſuch confeſſed Ignorance, to pretend themſelves able to diſcover theſe Truths, is Arrogance; to determine them by their own Reaſon, is Profaneneſs. In all ſuch Caſes, we advance beyond what is natural or lawful, and wantonly encroach upon the Bounds of Immortality.

Reaſon is in Man, what the ſubordinate miniſterial Power is in well-regulated Governments, not to enact Laws, but ſee the due Obſervance of them, to prove their Excellency, explain the Uſes, and enforce Obedience from the Rewards and Puniſhments inſeparably annexed to them. But to reſiſt the Authority of the Supreme Power, diſpute the Excellency of Laws, or refuſe Obedience to them, becauſe he was not the Enactor, or may not be able to diſcover the deep Counſels and Reaſons on which they are founded; and put in an Appeal to an Inferior Court of his own erecting, to try the Utility or Obligation of ſuch Laws, is both Folly and Rebellion.—Yet this Crime are they guilty of, who would determine Divine Things by Reaſon, Philoſophy, or Natural Light. They appeal to an inferior, uncommiſſioned, and incompetent Judge, and can never ſhew their Right to ſuch Claim, till they have proved theſe two Things; That the Knowledge of God can be limited, or the Mind of Man comprehend every thing.

Yet how far ſuch Appeals have been carried of late, let every one judge; what Pains and Labour taken to reform Religion by Philoſophy, (even to make

make mathematical Calculations of the Degrees of Probability in the Principles of Religion) that if one cannot be raiſed to the Sublimity of the other, we muſt reduce Faith to the Standard of Reaſon. In the modern Language, Divinity and Natural Theology paſs for equivalent Terms: The Light of Reaſon ſtands for Faith and Revelation: Antiquity is repreſented, as in poſſeſſion of all religious Truths, and Chriſtianity little more, than a Republication of the Law of Nature. Morality, eternal Fitneſſes and Relations of things are inculcated with great Vehemence, whilſt we ſeldom hear of Wiſdom, or Righteouſneſs, or Sanctification, or Redemption.

And the Conſequence has been, that Infidelity at laſt joined Iſſue with them upon their own Principles, and from the Conceſſions they had made undertook to ſhew that Chriſtianity was not neceſſary, and by this advantage obtained a Triumph over them. For if Nature and Reaſon can ſo eaſily diſcover the moſt important Truths, it will follow, that the chief Purpoſes of Revelation are in a great meaſure uſeleſs, if not altogether unneceſſary, and their own Arguments turned upon them, to root up the Foundations of all Religion. The Enemies of the Faith then aſſerted boldly, that the Law of Nature, or what the Light of Reaſon dictates, is the only Law of Man. That it takes in every thing, that is founded in the Reaſon and Nature of things, and therefore Revelation cannot be neceſſary: That God's Will is ſo clearly and fully manifeſted in the Book of Nature, that he who runs may read. And that he revealed his Will any way, beſides the Light of Nature, can only come under the head of Probability: The Conſequence of which they well know muſt be, that in proportion as Reaſon is exalted, and the Comprehenſion of human Minds enlarged beyond their proper Limits, juſt ſo far will Revelation be depreciated and rendered uſeleſs, till at laſt

Chriſtianity as old, &c. p. 23, 24.

Id. p. 162.

laſt Reaſon becomes abſolutely independent and ſelf-ſufficient. Thus a Zeal for Natural Theology had well nigh deſtroyed all Religion, and Dr. *Clarke* fell a ſacrifice to *Tindal*, by the very Weapons he had put into his Hands.

Yet there is no Obſervation capable of fuller Proof, than that Religion, through all Ages of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian State, was more or leſs pure according to the Alloy of Philoſophy or human Reaſon mix'd up with it. There was not an Error or Hereſy in the Primitive Church, that was not imbibed from *Plato*'s Academy, *Zeno*'s Portico, or ſome vain Reaſonings of the Pagan wiſe Men. In latter Ages the Schoolmen rejected *Plato*, and exalted *Ariſtotle* into the Chair of Chriſt, ſays *Tilenus*: eſteemed him the God of Wiſdom who could not err. And the Controverſy long ſubſiſted to which of them an Appeal lay for the Determination of Truth; ſo that there was great Neceſſity for the Apoſtle's Caution, *Col.* ii. 8. *Beware leſt any Man ſpoil you, through Philoſophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men*— which have always proved highly injurious to the Purity of Religion, and the great Objects of Faith which are ſupernaturally revealed. Many fatal Inſtances might be given of this in *Origen* and others. It was the affected Title of a Philoſopher, and the ſuperſtitious Adoration of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, that made *Julian* an Apoſtate. This drove *George Trapezuntius* to the extravagant Attempt of proving the Conformity between the Doctrine of *Ariſtotle* and Scripture: And hurried *Hermolaus Barbarus*, Patriarch of *Aquileia*, to the deteſtable Impiety of conſulting the Devil for the true Meaning of *Ariſtotle*'s ἐντελέχεια. And *Ramus* for his Animadverſions on that Philoſopher, was aſſaſſinated in *Paris*, his Corps dragged through the Streets, and whipped with Cords. So overheated have ſome Mens Heads been, that they looked

Tilenus Syntagm. part. 2. Diſp. 16. Theſ. 31.

looked upon all as Infidels and Hereticks, who had not the ſame Veneration for the Philoſophers, as the Apoſtles. In one Chriſtian Country they have taught that our Articles of Faith had been imperfect without Philoſophy: And in another read *Ariſtotle*'s Ethicks on *Sundays* to the People inſtead of the Goſpels. Such is the vain Arrogance of human Reaſon as to have puffed up ſome in every Age, to promiſe they would ſhew us the Truth by the mere Light of it, and maintain it as the only Rule of Faith.

On the contrary we may ſafely affirm, that no one ever looked for God and divine Truths by Reaſon only, but miſſed both one and the other. And ſurely we may in theſe Searches admire Reaſon, tho' we adore Revelation, and where we cannot fix their exact Bounds, rather ſtop too ſoon in our Determinations than too late; not thinking of our ſelves more highly than we ought to think. For it is no Abaſement of human Nature, to ſay, it is not Infallible, nor has all Truth under its View. Man is furniſhed with every thing proper or neceſſary to his Condition, and his Glory muſt be to act according to the Order and Perfection of his Being; but as he cannot exceed the Powers beſtowed on him, it is not Juſtice but Preſumption and Error to aſcribe Operations to him, which he never could attain or fulfil — Man has a Law (as all other Creatures of God have) which he is capable of obeying, and it is highly unphiloſophical, an arbitrary Aſſertion, to affirm he has performed Actions, which no Principle, no eſſential Power, no Experience, has or can prove him capable of.

The ancient Times, in whatever Light we view them, are a convincing Proof of this — The moſt exalted Capacities that ſoar'd as far as Reaſon could lead them without any ſuperior Aſſiſtance, always found themſelves entangled in inextricable Difficulties,

ties, which not being able to ſolve, they pronounced Incomprehenſible, and finding it impoſſible to arrive at clear Certainty or Knowledge, fell into the other Extreme, and becauſe the Intellect could not comprehend all Truth, concluded there was no Rule or Meaſure of it; that becauſe all things are not evident, nothing is. They ſo far diſcovered the Weakneſs and Confuſion of Reaſon, that many affirmed there was no ſuch thing as Science or Certainty, and that all our Wiſdom never went beyond Opinion and Probability.

This at leaſt may hint to us the unmeaſurable Diſtance betwixt Man confined to the loweſt Story of the World, and that Light which dazzles the Angels; and that it is not ſo eaſy a matter to pierce thoſe Veils and Clouds which God has placed between him and us, and diſcover his Exiſtence, Nature, or Eſſence. It may teach us to diſtruſt ſo wavering a Light as that of Nature, and adhere more cloſely to the Revealed one, which will ſupply its Defects, and leads us to Truths, which no Philoſophy ever did. "To find out Error, and "know a thing to be falſe, is Wiſdom, but only "human Wiſdom; beyond which no mortal Mind "can reach." *Democritus* was ſo ſenſible of this, that he affirmed, "He had rather diſcover one true "Cauſe of things, than be Maſter of the *Perſian* "Empire." But to know the Truth is divine Wiſdom, which Man never can, nor was intended to attain, except he is taught by God. Hence ſo many falſe Religions of old, and they who condemned them, could not find out a better. This was the utmoſt Stretch of human Philoſophy, to diſcover what was not true, but could not find out or tell what was ſo.

Lactant. p. 73. 127.

Euſeb. Præp. l. 14. c. 27.

The Stoicks above all others were Boaſters of Wiſdom, pretended to know all things and be deceived in nothing. Yet *Plutarch* ſays of them;

" That there neither had been, nor was a wiſe " Man on the face of the Earth." *Cicero* derides their Pretence, and ſays, " No Mortal ever attained " what they call Wiſdom." *Stoici eam ſapientiam interpretantur, quam adhuc nemo mortalis eſt conſecutus.* He denies not, as ſome did, the Truth of every thing; but affirms that Falſhood is ſo cloſely joined with Truth, and ſo like it, that there can be no ſure Rule of judging or diſcerning betwixt them. He ſaw the Vanity of the publick Religions, but ſtood in ſuſpenſe, not knowing what Path to take: And in this Diſtreſs of Mind uttered that paſſionate Wiſh: " O! that I could diſcover " Truth with the ſame eaſe that I can detect Falſ- " hood." But this exceeded his Strength, and that of every other Mortal.

Repug. Stoic. In Lælio. Lactant. Id.

The Third OBJECTION is, that this Hypotheſis is an Aſſault upon thoſe many excellent Perſons, who have defended Religion by Arguments drawn from Natural Theology.

As to the many admirable Treatiſes, wrote to demonſtrate the Exiſtence and Attributes of the Deity, with the great Duties of Religion thence to be inferred, according to the different Relations we ſtand in to God, our Neighbour, or Ourſelves; they are worthy of all poſſible Reverence and Eſteem, have been managed with the utmoſt Strength of Judgment and Perſpicuity of Reaſon, ſtrong and concluſive Arguments, in a Method ſtrict and demonſtrative, beyond what other Ages have produced. They are the Honour of the preſent, and will ſerve for the Inſtruction and Imitation of future Times. But notwithſtanding this, I can dare to affirm that theſe Enquiries were carried on, theſe Principles ſo firmly eſtabliſhed, theſe Conſequences ſo inconteſtably demonſtrated, not by the Strength of Reaſon or Light of Nature; but by an aſſiſtance far ſuperior, the Light and Evidence of Reve-

Revelation. It was under the Direction of that unerring and eternal Truth, that clear and more infallible Knowledge, than geometrical or metaphyſical Demonſtration, that the exalted Reaſon of theſe excellent Perſons hath carried their Labours ſo far in the ſervice of Religion—And if they had not had the Goſpel in their Hands, they would have wrote as looſely and incorrectly, as the Philoſophers before them. Let them have Honour, but the Glory of it be aſcribed only to God.

If this be not the Cauſe, let ſome other be aſſigned, why they write on divine Subjects ſo much clearer and fuller, and more conſiſtently than the Ancients did; or ſhew, which of the wiſe Men did it: For Nature and Reaſon are ſtill the ſame; the intellectual Faculties were as ſtrong then, as they are now. But the Truth is, unaſſiſted Reaſon was not ſufficient for the Task, and the primeval Revelations were become ſo obliterated and dark, that they had little advantage from it, except retaining the Names of Things. And Mankind looking on it as a natural Right to argue for themſelves, every one enquired after God in the ſame manner as they did after Natural Things, *i. e.* they ſought for him in their own Minds, and endeavoured by the Force of their own Wiſdom to find him out; but not being able to do it, contented themſelves with what ſeemed moſt probable. And though every one's Sentiment differed eſſentially from another, yet the Prejudice in favour of his own Underſtanding, made him zealous to maintain it; ſo there were as many Opinions, or different Gods, taught and defended, as there had been Philoſophers in the World.

Athenag. p. 28.

Moſt of them retained or picked up ſome Truth, but not being able to trace out the Cauſes or Conſequences of Things, or comprehend the true End of Man, for which he was created (which not one of

Lactant. p. 623.

of them ever did) could not produce proper Arguments to ſupport the very Truths, they were in poſſeſſion of. And the Spirit of Contradiction ſo far prevailed, that when they were in the Right, they diſputed themſelves out of it, and brought every thing into Confuſion. So that in Divine Things, it is difficult, if not impoſſible, to know what their real Thoughts were, or what it was they had a mind to eſtabliſh. If men ſurmiſe, or gueſs right, yet have no certainty, it is Opinion, not Knowledge; they ſtumble upon Truth, but do not find it; nor is it Truth to them, as not knowing, or being capable of proving it to be ſo. Lactant. l. 3. p. 300. Arnob. p. 46.

So that if Truth was in Philoſophy, yet when divided into ſo many Sects, not one Point (except Names) agreed on, there was Opinion, but no Knowledge among them; for Knowledge conſiſts in Certainty, Opinion in what is doubtful. And the only Concluſion to be drawn from ſuch a variety of Teachers, Contradictions, and Uncertainties, is that none of them underſtood the Syſtem of Virtue or Religion ſcientifically. In ſuch a Diverſity then, whom muſt we follow, or what believe? Where ſhall Truth be placed? If in one Sect, you deſtroy the reſt; if in all, you deſtroy Truth. For Truth is but one, and always conſiſtent; the Philoſopher never conſiſtent with Truth or with himſelf. Therefore ſuch a party-coloured Scheme as they offer'd muſt be falſe, no ſure Law or Rule of Life to be extracted from it. For they had ſome excellent Notions in the general, ſuch as to purſue Good, and avoid Evil: Yet the Difficulty lay in applying them to particular Actions. They were ſenſible of this, and complained of it, as the Cauſe of all Evil to Mankind. Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ αἴτιον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντων τῶν κακῶν, τὸ τὰς προλήψεις τὰς κοινὰς μὴ δύνασθαι ἐφαρμόζειν ταῖς ἐπὶ μέρους. Epictet. l. 3. Diſſert. 126.

They knew not what was Good or Evil, ſo could not

not apply the Rule to Practice; the Principle was good, but the Concluſion generally Falſhood. And what was Divine in Theory, became uſeleſs in Life.

If it be otherwiſe, and ſupernatural Truths are ſo evident to the Light of Reaſon, why did they not with Eaſe and Certainty arrive at the Knowledge and Uſes of them? Why not all agree in neceſſary, fit, congruous, eternal and unalterable Principles, ſo as to draw ſure and ſteady Conſequences from them, without approving and condemning the ſame thing, in points of higheſt importance, or confeſſing themſelves ſo divided in Thought as not to know what to determine? Which of the Philoſophers, *Plato*, or *Ariſtotle*, or *Cicero*, did this? Let him be named, that we may know where to find this Body of Ethicks, and complete Syſtem of Moral Righteouſneſs: One whoſe Doctrines are ſo conſiſtent, as all of them to be juſtifiable; for if any be allowed, ſo muſt the whole, or the Man can be of no Authority. For whoever is guilty of Contradictions, or utters as much Falſhood as Truth (which is their Caſe) deſerves Credit on neither ſide of the Queſtion. Becauſe there muſt be an eternal Diſpute in ſeparating things, what to admit, or reject, ſince the Balance is equal, and both have the ſame Grounds for Aſſent; and conſequently neither Scale has power to determine the Judgment. For if there had been any ſure Rule of coming at Truth in one Caſe, it muſt alſo have directed in the other. If there was not, a Propoſition tho' true, was only Surmiſe, a Leſſon learned by rote, not Certainty in him that delivered it.

What Dependence then can there be on the Ancients? If we diſagree, or are miſtaken in natural things, there is no harm: to know them is little Profit, to be ignorant of them little Diſadvantage. But in divine and moral ones, which are to direct us to our final Good, there is no room for Diſagreement

ment or Error; Philoſophy muſt have but one Voice, muſt think and ſpeak the ſame thing, for here Miſtakes are fatal, and the End of Life deſtroy'd. To reſt it therefore on the Conſent or Practice of the Heathens, is to place it on the Winds and Waves, which are not more uncertain than their Faith or Morals were. Name any one Doctrine relating to ſpiritual Subjects, and I will ſhew an hundred Contrarieties, an hundred incompatible Notions concerning it, among theſe ſo much boaſted Ancients; and amidſt ſo much Confuſion, what can be determined? Our Idolatry exceeds theirs; Heroes were once deified for real Virtues, Philoſophers at preſent for imaginary ones, for what they abſolutely diſclaimed; and we muſt not believe *them*, leſt we hurt an Hypotheſis that cannot be ſupported without giving the Lye to what they affirm concerning themſelves.

Which of them does not conſtantly lament the Ignorance, Weakneſs, and Inability of Human Nature for theſe Speculations? I ſhall have occaſion to produce them elſewhere, ſo need mention but one or two at preſent. *Socrates*, who ſtands in the foremoſt rank, is full to this purpoſe; The Vanity of others in pretending to Wiſdom, and the little Truth or Solidity he found in the Learning of the World, fully convinced him of what he ſo often repeated; That he knew but one thing with Certainty, and that was his Ignorance of all things. *Plato* over and over again reminds his Hearers, That in theſe Subjects they were not to expect Proof, but only Probability for them. *Ariſtotle* condemns his Predeceſſors as the moſt fooliſh and vain-glorious Perſons in the World, from a Conviction of their Ignorance, and the Vanity of imagining that he had carried Philoſophy to the utmoſt Perfection it was capable of. Though no one ſaid or believed leſs of divine Matters than he did. *Tully*, though ſuch

Cic. Tuſc. Q. L. 3. N. 28.

an Admirer of Philoſophy, frequently complains that among the Multitude of its Profeſſors there never had been one wiſe one —— That we are blind in the Diſcernment of Wiſdom—That ſome unaccountable, we know not what Error, and miſerable Ignorance of the Truth, has got Poſſeſſion of us—

Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 39. which he accounts for in this manner. " That all " Things are ſurrounded and concealed with ſo " thick a Darkneſs, that no Strength of Mind can

Id. l. 4. n. 3. " penetrate them.—That Knowledge is hindered by " ſo many Obſtructions" — that the wiſeſt of the Ancients did not without reaſon diſtruſt their ever

Id. l. 1. n. 12. being able to find out what they deſired— " That " this induced *Socrates* and all of them to confeſs " their Ignorance, and believe that nothing could " be known, comprehended, or underſtood:" Not out of Obſtinacy or Dogmaticalneſs, but from the Narrowneſs of their Senſes, the Weakneſs of their Minds, the Shortneſs of Life, and Truth being hid as it were in a deep Well. Hence all things were maintained from Opinion or Precept, not from any ſure Rule of Truth: For all things were involved in impenetrable Darkneſs.

Who therefore would not diſtruſt ſuch a Guide, as Reaſon or Nature, which the Heathens found ſo miſerably blind and defective, and could receive no Comfort or Satisfaction from? Yet this was always the Caſe. In things remote from Obſervation, and leſs cogniſable by the Senſes, Philoſophy could never go far, but being perpetually at a loſs, was forced to give over the purſuit; like one that knows not the right Way, when he comes to a place where the Road divides into different Paths, ſtands in ſuſpenſe, not daring to chooſe any, and not able to follow all. Such is the Condition of him who has no certain Knowledge of the Truth, he wavers in his Mind, changes his Opinion as often as any ſuſpicious Objections come in his way, is in a reſtleſs

reſtleſs Condition, and floating on Uncertainties. This could proceed from nothing, but their Ignorance of Supernatural things, which ſurpaſſed the Efforts of Human Underſtanding, and what unaſſiſted Reaſon could give them no Satisfaction in. They underſtood not the general Propoſitions, therefore could not poſſibly ſee the Conſequences which neceſſarily flowed from them, and this made their Arguments commonly to err ſo wide from the Truth, and be altogether inconcluſive.

Of abſtracted inviſible things they knew little, and agreed leſs; when they reaſon'd on the Creation, and firſt Principles out of which all things were formed, they were ſo divided, "That a Mind "of a divine Underſtanding would be at a loſs, "which Philoſopher's Opinion to chooſe," yet more than one he could not, ſuch were the Diſſenſions among thoſe great Men:—"What ſeemed cer- "tain to one, had ſcarcely the appearance of Proba- "bility to another, ſo equal are the Reaſons even "for contrary Opinions, that we can neither ima- "gine or know, whether this World was framed "by divine Counſel, or not."—When they argued on Providence, *Zeno* and the Stoicks tell them, "That the Æther informed with a Mind, is "the greateſt God, and governs all things;" *Cleanthes*, his Diſciple, "That the Sun ruled, and had "the Direction;" Thus by the differences of wiſe Men, we know not what God to ſerve, the Æther or the Sun—"One will have us all Soul, and ano- "ther all Body—Some placed moral Good and "Evil in the Nature of Actions, and of Things; "others maintained that all Actions were in their "Nature indifferent, and become Good or Evil "from Inſtitution only, as Law or Cuſtom had "determined."—Every thing but Truth had its Patron and Defender. Ask them the Reaſon of this, and they will tell you, "That each ſupported his "own

Cic. Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 34.

Id. n. 40.

Id. n. 41.

Id. n. 45. Diog. Laert.

Tuſc. Q. l. 4. n. 3.

" own Opinion, becauſe nothing better was of-
" fered." Or allowing that ſome few (two or three ſays Dr. *Clarke*) by Travel, and Collections from foreign Schools, together with obſerving the Works of Nature (the principal Subject of Philoſophy) did raiſe their Minds to juſter Contemplations of the Deity; yet their Notions of his Attributes and Will were ſo imperfect, that they could never frame ſuch a Connexion of divine Truths and their Obligations, as to influence the Heart, reform the Manners, or direct the Practice of themſelves or others.

Pythagoras on this account changed the Name of wiſe Men into Lovers of Wiſdom, as believing it not to be attained by human Means. For if the ſtudy of Philoſophy, or Application, had been a certain Path to it, it muſt have been diſcovered by ſome of thoſe exalted Spirits. But when through ſucceſſive Ages ſo many great and accurate Minds were broke, and worn out in the Search of it, yet all in vain: It ſhews the wideſt difference between Philoſophy and true Wiſdom, and that its Profeſſors neither knew, what, or where the Truth was, they ſo ardently ſought for. *Cicero* obſerving this, it made him lay down the following Rule for his philoſophical Enquiries: " That as Judgment was
" free, and every one at liberty to ſupport his
" own Opinion, he would not tie himſelf down to
" any Sect or School, but always adhere to that
" which was moſt probable."— And yet what is the Concluſion of all his Labours conſecrated to the Search of diſintereſted Knowledge, beyond what any other uninſpired Perſon ever made? " We only
" follow Probabilities, and are not able to go a
" Step further."

Tuſc. Q. l. 4. n. 4.

Id. l. 1. n. 2.

And whatever extraordinary things the Maintainers of the Law of Nature, in ſupport of their Arguments, have ſaid of the Ancients; yet finding them ſo often at a loſs, perplexed, and entangled; in

in their cooler Hours they ſpeak of the Weakneſs of Reaſon (and of them) as the Philoſophers did; and make ſuch Conceſſions, as utterly invalidate its Teſtimony. I have a right to appeal to them, which I ſhall frequently do, and think the Cauſe might be left to their Determination.

But from what has been ſaid, an Obſervation ariſes, which, being allowed on all hands, ought to be carried through this Diſpute, and that is, the great difference between Reaſon in a State of Nature, or aſſiſted with very ſmall Degrees of external Light; and Reaſon guided by Revelation, or directed by Grace; both which have removed the Doubts and Obſcurities of former Ages, plainly unfolded the ſublimeſt Truths, the Exiſtence and Eſſence of a Deity, the Means of Reconciliation, the Immortality of the Soul, a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, and declared in the plaineſt manner, the Will of the Supreme Being, as a Law and Rule of Life to Men — What was to one Opinion, to the other is Evidence; what the Eye of Reaſon could not diſcover, that of Faith diſtinctly ſees. One argues from Doubts and Probabilities, the other on firm eſtabliſhed Principles, between which there can be no Proportion. And the former can only come under this Conſideration: Not what Reaſon is able to apprehend when propoſed, nor how far enlarge its Knowledge from the Advantage of ampler Diſcoveries, in diſcerning the Evidence of many Truths deducible from them, or Arguments for their Confirmation: But only what naked unaſſiſted Reaſon could attain without any other Light or Direction — On this footing only the preſent Hypotheſis is, or can be grounded; and will (I doubt not) appear equally redounding to the Honour of God, more conſiſtent with Scripture, Hiſtory, Reaſon, the Nature of Things, com-

mon Obſervation, and liable to fewer Difficulties than any other.

As to the Fourth Objection: This cannot throw the leaſt Imputation on the wiſer Heathens, who by all Parties are allowed to have had a more defective Light, than what *Jews* did, or Chriſtians do enjoy. To caſt any Blemiſh upon them would be degrading human Nature, of which they were aſtoniſhing and illuſtrious Ornaments. They ſeem to have a Dignity of Soul peculiar to themſelves, a Mind large and imperious, Thoughts manly and noble, Searches after Truth quick and indefatigable, Sentiments of Virtue in particular Inſtances very ſublime, and carried human Wit and Reaſon to the utmoſt pitch it was capable of under their Circumſtances. They now live in their Writings, more than in their Marbles, muſt be reverenc'd and eſteem'd whilſt Learning flouriſhes in the World, and will be Examples to all ſucceeding Generations. Their making ſuch vaſt Efforts is truly admirable, and by what they have done, we may judge what greater Things they would have performed, had their Aſſiſtances been equal to thoſe of later Ages; and to the want of them muſt be aſcribed the many Errors and Imperfections they inevitably fell into; which to me ſeems the higheſt Encomium that can be given of them.

It is an amiable and noble Character to ſay, they did whatever was in their Power to benefit and inſtruct Mankind. As on the other hand, to ſuppoſe them able to have given the World a complete Syſtem of religious Virtue, yet did not, or would not do it, is ſtaining them with the blackeſt Infamy and Reproach. Or to ſay, a perfect Rule of Life is diſcoverable by Reaſon, yet no ſuch Rule is to be found in the collective Writings of all, much leſs in any one of thoſe uncommon Spirits (who, if ever Men

Men did, made a proper uſe of their Intellectuals, by purſuing all the Means of Knowledge and Inſtruction) is to affirm and deny the ſame thing, that Nature can, and cannot do it; for theſe Propoſitions, "No Man has been wiſe, and no Man can "be wiſe, are equivalent." And if it were a Task above their Capacities (as will be hereafter fully manifeſted) it muſt be ſo to every Mortal, who has no other Teacher; and there could be no ſuch thing as Natural Religion. Cic. Nat. Deorum, l. 3. n. 32.

It is therefore an Act of Juſtice we owe to Virtue, to them, and to ourſelves, to examine their Opinions, embrace what is good, reject the bad, ſeparate the Ore from the Droſs, Truth from Falſhood, admire their Merit without idolizing their Authority, and praiſe their Virtues without ſubſcribing to their Errors or Failings. Not to pay them an implicit Faith, and worſhip them as Gods, with *Cicero: Plato, Deus ille noſter.* Nor chooſe to err with a Maſter, rather than be in the right with others: *Errare malo cum Platone, quam cum iſtis vera ſentire.* Such was the Prejudice to Party rather than to Truth; or perhaps it is a Strength which few Men can arrive at, to preſerve the entire Prerogative of Judgment, ſo as never to be over-ruled by falſe Reaſon or incompetent Authority. Nay, *Plato*, according to *Ammonius*, has given us a Rule to judge by, in all ſuch Caſes. "*Socrates* is dear, "but Truth much dearer to us." And he puts into his Maſter's Mouth the ſame Advice to *Cimias* and *Cebes*; "Believe me only thus far as to "have a great Eſteem for Truth, but very little "for *Socrates*." We muſt and ought to differ from every one, ſo far (and no further) as he differs from Truth. This is the Privilege of Reaſon, not to be fettered down by the Opinions or Underſtanding of others; and it is a real Greatneſs of Soul to preſerve our Liberty entire, ſo as to be able to aſſert the

Ad Attic. l. 4 Epiſt. 16.

Tuſc. Q. l. 1. n. 17.

In Ariſtot. Categor. p. 4.

Phæd. p. 91.

the one, and diſcard the other, according to our beſt Light, and the juſteſt Apprehenſions we have; and in all philoſophical Enquiries to proportion our Aſſent to the different Degrees of Certitude, in the Subject of Debate.

Plato indeed ſpoke in a nobler Strain of the Deity, than any who went before him; yet delivers numberleſs things inconſiſtent with ſuch a Being, and talks, as the Poets and others did, of the Origin, Nature, and Vices of the Gods. He has ſome inimitable Sentiments of Virtue, but at the ſame time defends many Principles productive of the fouleſt Errors. "No one had grander Ideas, or "roſe higher in ſublime Notions, nor did any fall "into more grievous and abominable Miſtakes."

Vid. Serrani Præf. in Phileb.

His Scholar *Ariſtotle* is another Inſtance of this; a Man of moſt profound Judgment and Accuracy, called the finiſhing Stroke of Nature, the Meaſure of human Underſtanding, as knowing all that any Mortal is capable of knowing: So that *Averroes* thought Nature was not perfect till he was born. Yet in the Articles of greateſt Importance, even concerning God, he ſpeaks contradictory and inconſiſtent things: And ſo perplexedly of the Souls Immortality, that, inſtead of clearing up Doubts, he raiſed the utmoſt Difficulties in the Minds of Men.

The ſame may be ſaid of all the reſt. If their Perfections were many, ſo were their Faults; their Virtues were great, but ſo were their Vices; if Rays of Light ſhine forth in their Writings, it is from the midſt of a thick Darkneſs; and the Veins of Gold which lie in them, are hid under a Maſs of Fable and Error. When therefore we meet with ſome glittering Expreſſions, and ſhining Sentences, we need not be tranſported, and lay ſo great a Streſs upon them, as if the whole of their Religion was equally pure and orthodox. They are blended with Principles unworthy of a Deity and deſtructive

ſtructive of Virtue; and when examined will be found to be looſe independent Periods, without any Coherence to the Subject or one another. How dazzling ſoever they may be, their being mixed with ſo many falſe defective Notions, muſt convince us, that their Opinions are but the Shadows of Truth; and that no Rule of Duty can with ſafety be extracted from them; that Reaſon was inſufficient to Divine Knowledge, and therefore great Caution ſhould be uſed in forming our Judgments from them. If the Heathens, from perceiving this Imperfection of Nature's Light, with freedom examined and condemned each other's Sentiments; to deny the ſame liberty to Chriſtians would be an unreaſonable Impoſition. Men of Parts and Leiſure may read the Philoſophers as an uſeful Entertainment of the Mind, and find many things truly great and worthy their Admiration: But as a Rule of Life, they are infinitely defective, and therefore of no uſe to the generality of Mankind.

Nor was this the Opinion of private Perſons only, but of their wiſeſt and beſt regulated States. When they wanted direction in religious Matters, they did not imagine their own or the Philoſopher's Reaſon able to inſtruct them, but that they were under a neceſſity of applying to the Gods for a Rule of Devotion. *Cicero* inſtances this of the *Athenians*, who ſending to inquire of *Apollo* what Religion they ſhould profeſs and hold? The Oracle anſwered, "That of their Forefathers." They again demanded, ſince the Religions of their Anceſtors were various, which of them they ſhould pitch upon? The Oracle replied, "The beſt." This ſhews the Opinion of the Heathens, that a Light ſuperior to that of Nature was wanted in divine Affairs; The only recourſe was to the Gods. And at the ſame time gives a View of the lamentable Ignorance they were in concerning them, who had ſuch Gods for their

their Counſellors, that could give no Deſcription or Characters whereby true Religion was to be known, but thoſe of Tradition and Antiquity. The Intent of the *Athenians* was to embrace the beſt, but neither they nor the *Pythian* could tell what it was. And it is amazing that Chriſtians ſhould refer the Determination of any thing ſacred to a Nation, where both Gods and Men ſo avowedly confeſs their Ignorance.

I would from hence infer two Things; Firſt, That we ought not to reſt implicitly on the Authority of Philoſophers; it being their peculiar Error, to be Slaves to an Hypotheſis, and never ſacrifice to Truth: Nor judge of the Light of Nature by ſententious Scraps pick'd out of them, but from comparing the whole of what they taught with Truth. And Secondly, That if no better Light than that of Reaſon had been vouchſafed to Mankind, they had ever been to ſeek in theſe Points of the higheſt Moment, what was the End of Man, and what the ſure Means of attaining it; as the moſt zealous Defenders of Natural Religion allow—To which I ſhall add, that from the beginning of the World, they would have remained in utter Ignorance of God and all manner of Religion.

For Reaſon cannot reach what is above it, without ſome aſſiſtance beſides its own. The Philoſophers knew more than others, but fell infinitely ſhort of Truth. And their ſoaring ſo high in ſome things, then immediately dropping into an Abyſs of Error and Impiety, ought to humble human Reaſon, and teach us this at leaſt, that the philoſophical Light in its utmoſt Strength ſtands in need of a Revealed one to ſupply its Defects; which was the great Want and Deſideratum of the wiſer Heathens—and at the ſame time makes us ſuſpect, that in their loftieſt Flights they raiſed themſelves on borrowed Pinions. For in all Ages they wrecked their Brains to the utmoſt

moſt about important Points in Divinity, yet were forced to leave them undecided; The Attempt was at Impoſſibilities, and Reaſon ever found them out of its Depth, and beyond its Limits. So that Duty, Happineſs, and the true End of Man, were never fixed or demonſtrated by any one of them.

Nor let it be ſaid, The Accuſation is carried too far. Inquire of their profeſſed Admirers and Advocates, and they will tell us the ſame thing: That with the good Principles they had received, they mixed the moſt ridiculous Trifles and Follies—Even *Serranus* can confeſs it of his beloved *Plato*, who from his almoſt incredible Knowledge of ſublime Truths, God, the Soul, and a future Life, was called by Antiquity, the *Homer* and the God of Philoſophers: By Chriſtians the wiſeſt, the beſt, the moſt uſeful and holy, the moſt venerable and divine of all among them: Yet taught the moſt prodigious Errors and abominable Vices. That he wandered about the wide Sea of Knowledge, impatient after Truth; but having no certain Port to ſteer to, nor Pilot to direct him, nor ſufficient Light from Heaven to make Obſervations by; the Conſciouſneſs of his own Ignorance made him complain that he was (κλυδωνιζόμενος) toſſed about like the Waves, and acknowledge the want of a divine Guide, and earneſtly deſire ſuch aſſiſtance to arrive at certain Truth—He was ſenſible of the Depravity of human Nature, that the utmoſt force of Reaſon was weak and dull, oppreſſed by a groſs earthly Ignorance; that the true and primitive Form of the Mind, now polluted with innumerable Vices, could not poſſibly be diſcerned. That great Diſorders were introduced into the Soul of Man, and that we cannot judge thereof, by what we now perceive of it, incloſed within the Body, and defiled with many Evils. Like the Statue of the Sea-God *Glaucus*, we are ignorant of its former Beauty; ſome Parts

Præf. in Plat. Op.

Repub. 10. p. 611.

Parts of it broke, others worn with the violence of the Waves, almoſt covered with Shells and Weeds, and Stones growing over it, that it retains but little of its ancient Form—" That the Mind at " preſent has but little ſolid Knowledge, knows " things but as in a Dream, and in reality is igno- " rant of every thing—And he was ſo far from aſ- " cribing Perfection to human Nature, that he af- " firms he had never met with a Man who knew " what Virtue was."

Politicus, p. 277.

Meno, p. 71.

But though the pure Light of original Wiſdom was, by Sin and the withdrawing of the divine Preſence, exceedingly darkened in the Minds of Men, yet was it not quite extinguiſhed; but by Conveyance of original Revelations, the Direction of Providence, and the conſtant Practice of religious Acts in ſome Parts of the World; the κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, common Notices of God, and his Worſhip, of Juſtice, and Society, were kept alive in the Hearts and Conſciences of Men; by which means ſome Apprehenſions of a Deity and Worſhip, however unbecoming, were retained in moſt Nations of the Earth.

Thus in the midſt of a Night of Ignorance, ſome Rays of Light ſhone forth, but the Darkneſs comprehended them not. And when *Thales*, *Plato*, and others ſome Ages after imported into *Greece* more noble Maxims and general Propoſitions concerning God, Virtue, Happineſs, and a future State; all that Philoſophy could extract from them, was but mere Conjecture, the Inferences of little real Uſe, and the Concluſions often intolerable—Inſtead of improving Faith, they diſguiſed it by their reaſoning upon it, and mixing it up with their own Fancies and Superſtitions. Though the Principles were good, yet the Arguments proved bad, from their being entirely ignorant of the Manner and Reaſons of them. They had the Names, but not the Senſe or Explanation; ſo that their Words

often expreſſed and ſignified more, than they did or could conceive in their Minds—This was the Occaſion of their Inconſiſtency, neither the Terms, or Connexion of them being underſtood, made the Deductions irregular or monſtrous; and from the Corruption of Truth did ſo much Error abound in the World. This made *Plato*, who at ſome times diſcourſes moſt fitly of the Divine Nature, ſo conſtantly loſe the Path he had entred on, and wander back to his former State of Darkneſs. Truths to them, were like Lightning in a tempeſtuous Night to a loſt Traveller, which dazzles for a Moment, but proves of no real ſervice to direct him. Even *Plato*, I ſay, who was vaſtly ſuperior to all that went before him in the Knowledge of divine Things, and had learned enough to diſcern the Vanity of many prevailing Superſtitions, could by the help of Nature or Philoſophy go no further. But amidſt the Perfections he had conceived of the Deity, recommends the Worſhip of falſe Gods, and the ſame Sacrifices as the People offer'd to their Idols. When one would think him on the very brink of Truth, he on a ſudden turns back to all the Madneſs and Folly of his Country. In Timæo.

Now if we try all Methods of accounting for this, we ſhall find none rational, or conſiſtent with the Character and Dignity of this great Man, ſo impatient after Knowledge, who had treaſured up ſuch noble Principles, and yet was able to make ſo little uſe of them; but that Theology was not a Science; they underſtood not the Nature or Importance of it; neither what its Terms ſignified, nor what Conſequences ought naturally to have been made from them; which they muſt neceſſarily have done, if what they delivered of ſacred Matters had been of their own Invention. I am aware of what is always ſaid in Anſwer to this; that the Fear of *Socrates*'s Priſon was the Cauſe of *Plato* and others conceal-

concealing their real Sentiments. But this is a Refuge ſo baſe and abject, as to render Philoſophy and its Teachers contemptible both to God and Man. For if this Apology be true, it will follow, Firſt, That we can never tell what their real Sentiments were, and therefore they cannot be appealed to upon any Occaſion. Secondly, That they did not ſuppoſe there were any Obligations in Religion, ſince it was not attended with Hopes or Fear, Reverence or Obedience; for if it had, among the Thouſands who every day ruſhed upon Death, for the ſake of their Country, more than one muſt have been found, who dared to have ſacrificed themſelves for the ſake of Truth. This evidently appears on the preaching the Goſpel, when the Convert Heathens no ſooner ſaw the Dependence of Religion on the Will of the true God, but every one was a *Socrates*, ready to undergo Martyrdom for it. This Method therefore of accounting for the Defects in Philoſophy, is falſe or unworthy. But it is an Apology becoming the Dignity of *Plato*; it is a true one, to ſay, "That *Grecian* Wiſdom was the Spoil of "*Egyptian* and Oriental Schools, where ancient "Truths had been miſerably mangled and defa-"ced, and the Light of natural Reaſon was too "weak, to reſtore them to their original Holi-"neſs and Purity."

The ſame Obſervation will hold univerſally true, even of *Cicero*, the greateſt of them; who in ſo many Places, eſpecially his juſtly admired Dream of *Scipio*, wherein he ſoars with that Majeſty, teaches us to deſpiſe the World, propoſes ſuch glorious Rewards to Virtue, touches the Paſſions with that Delicacy, that they accompany him to the Stars with a raviſhing Pleaſure, ſeem to hear the Harmony he deſcribes above, and the Mind almoſt believes he is ſhewing the way to a real Immortality. Yet Reaſon is loſt in the Clouds, his Wings fail

fail him, and he drops faſter than he roſe before; his mighty Genius could add nothing to what every Pagan knew, talks of the Deification of *Romulus*, the Eternity of the Soul, from the old but falſe Argument of its being the Principle of Motion, and a Self-mover, and inſtead of the Certainty of a future State concludes with the ſtale *Pythagorean* Doctrine of Tranſmigration. Thus *Plato* in his *Timæus* wanders into all the Errors that the Philoſophers or Poets had done.

We ſay not, there are no divine Truths among their Writings, but none ſcientifically underſtood or proved. That the Philoſophers ſpake well as learned Men, were Improvers of every Art and Science, except Divinity, in human Studies carried the Mind to its utmoſt Pitch, and in their Obſervations and Inferences from natural Things even ſeemed to ſurpaſs it. But in ſacred Ones were ever at a loſs, "They could not exceed the Powers of Nature, "nor ſpeak Truth on thoſe Subjects, having never "learned it of him who could alone inſtruct "them; nor ever came ſo near it, as when they "confeſſed their Ignorance of it." Which may teach us, that our only ſure Retreat is to a ſupernatural Light, and to have no Confidence in vain Philoſophy, leſt it deceive us to the Prejudice of Religion: A Caution which the early Chriſtians always uſed. St. *Jerom* does not ſtick to ſay, *Et cum ſuis ſtultus Plato diſcipulis; Ariſtoteli ſua argumenta non proderunt.* And he imputes the Riſe of all Hereſy to *Plato* and the *Platoniſts*. And *Origen*, That if one may dare to ſpeak the Truth, the reading of *Plato*'s elegant Works profited but very few, if it profited at all — And what Poiſon lurks, how many Snares lie under the ſpecious Words of Science falſly ſo called, appears from this Confeſſion of *Ficinus*: That had it not been for the care of a learned Friend, theſe his beloved Studies had led him into

Lactant. l. 3. p. 212.

Epiſt. ad Heliodorum.

Cont. Celſ. l. 6. p. 275.

the moſt pernicious fundamental Errors. We muſt beware then, that an Admiration of their Opinions beget not a Slavery to them. No αὐτὸς ἔφα, no Authority but that which is Divine, can be the Meaſure or Standard of Truth. The beſt of Philoſophers, though he indulged himſelf in it, condemned it in others — *Apud quos tantum præjudicata opinio poterat, ut ſine Ratione valeret Autoritas.* This may alſo ſhew us the vain Pretenſions of modern Philoſophy, that from the Clearneſs and Connexion of Ideas, Man may learn his Duty. Whereas the greateſt Heathens, notwithſtanding their Sagacity and Attention, had not clear Ideas of firſt Principles, nor ſaw the Connexion of one Duty upon them. As alſo of ſuch other modern Doctrines: "That they who never heard of any external Re- "velation, yet if they knew from the Nature of "Things, what is fit for them do, they know all "that God will, or can require of them."—Since it appears that all theſe things were above the Strength of human Minds; they neither underſtood the Nature of things, nor could aſſign one Reaſon for them, nor ſaw what was fit to be done, nor that it was the Will of God, nor their Obligation to practiſe it—And if they did not, it is Religion, not Reaſon, which teaches theſe Truths.

Cic. Nat. D.

Chriſtianity as old, &c. p. 323.

What I ſay is confirmed by the Judgment of moſt illuſtrious Men, at home and abroad. Among the latter, one of vaſt Erudition (the famous Monſieur *Perrot*) has theſe Words. "No one but a "Novice in Philoſophy, will think that all man- "ner of Queſtions may be reſolved by it; they "who go further in the Knowledge of things, meet "with greater Difficulties; two contrary Opinions "are often equally probable; and if they embrace "one of them, it is rather out of Inclination than "Reaſon. Man cannot judge certainly of any "thing whatſoever, his Reaſon deceives him as well

" well as his Senſes; we live among Errors and " Doubts, and have no certain Truths here be- " low, but thoſe which God has revealed. Take a " ſight of all the Schools of Philoſophy, conſider " what they do, and teach there: You will find " Preſumption in ſome, Obſtinacy in others, Igno- " rance, Error and Weakneſs in them all."—Since " then Reaſon is ſo weak, that the leaſt Difficulties " puzzle it, is deceived and miſtaken at every turn, " let us be ſure not to truſt ſo blind a Guide, nor " ground our Belief on ſo weak a Foundation — " Not rely upon our Arguments, but upon him who " made Heaven and Earth — Let us always remem- " ber that we muſt believe in God and not our- " ſelves, and if we uſe our Reaſon in what con- " cerns divine Things, we only imitate the Cynick, " who not contented with the Light of the Sun, " took a Candle at Noon-day to ſearch for a good " Man." To which his Commentator adds, " That " a Perſuaſion grounded upon the Light of Na- " ture, ought to be conſidered in a Chriſtian, as " Eloquence in a Philoſopher, or Agreeableneſs in " Hiſtory; they are no eſſential Parts, the want of " them can be no Prejudice, though to enjoy them " be no Diſadvantage — But the Uncertainty of " Reaſon and the Certainty of divine Faith muſt " diſpoſe us to be always ready to loſe Sight of " Philoſophy, when it cannot be extended to the " Doctrines that are above its reach, and beyond " the Capacity of our Reaſon."

Mr. *Locke*, who ſo thoroughly ſaw the Limits of human Underſtanding, and far from being preju- diced in favour of this Hypotheſis, could not help remarking: " Whatever was the Cauſe, 'tis plain " in Fact, human Reaſon unaſſiſted, failed Men in " its great and proper Buſineſs of Morality. It " never, from unqueſtionable Principles by their " Deductions, made out an entire Body of the

" Law of Nature. And he that ſhall collect all the " moral Rules of the Philoſophers, and compare " them with thoſe contained in the New Teſtament, " will find them to come ſhort of the Morality de- " livered by our Saviour, and taught by his Apo- " ſtles; a College made up for the moſt part of " ignorant but inſpired Fiſhermen."

To which I ſhall add the Teſtimony of that moſt learned Philoſopher and able Defender of Natural Religion, Dr. *Clarke:* " That notwithſtanding the " original Fitneſs of Mens natural Faculties and " Capacities, to ſearch after and apprehend God, " yet in fact Men, without the Aſſiſtance of Reve- " lation, did not attain to a right Knowledge of " him in any conſiderable Degree.—Of the Philoſo- " phers themſelves who ſhould have corrected the " Errors of the vulgar, ſome argued themſelves out " of the Belief of the very Being of God, ſome " by aſcribing all things to Chance, others to ab- " ſolute Fatality, equally ſubverted all true Noti- " ons of Religion, and made the Doctrine of the " Reſurrection of the Dead, and of a future Judg- " ment, needleſs and impoſſible. Moſt of them " allowed and encouraged the Worſhip of ſuch falſe " Gods, as the Poets had firſt feign'd like the moſt " wicked Men—Some profeſſed open Immorality— " Others by ſubtile Diſtinctions patronized particu- " lar Vices to which themſelves were moſt addict- " ed—The better ſort of them, who were the moſt " celebrated, and with the greateſt Reaſon diſ- " courſed, yet with much Uncertainty and Doubt- " fulneſs, concerning things of the higheſt Impor- " tance, the Providence of God in governing the " World, the Immortality of the Soul, and a fu- " ture Judgment. And excepting two or three " very eminent Perſons, who appeared ſingly in ſo " many different Ages of the World, as Lights " raiſed up by Providence, to ſhine in a dark Place:

Clarke's Serm. vol. 2.

" Excepting

" Excepting theſe, I ſay, the generality of the Phi-
" loſophers Diſputes, even upon theſe moſt impor-
" tant Subjects, were managed in a way of Pride
" and vain Glory, Subtilty and Strife, ending in
" nothing but Words and empty Contention; and
" having little or no Influence and Authority, to
" amend and reform the Manners of a degenerate
" and corrupt World."

Is it poſſible to give a more deſponding account of the Light of Nature, than this? That notwithſtanding the Fitneſs of Mens Capacities to ſearch after and apprehend God; yet, in fact, without Revelation, they did attain no competent Knowledge of him. That all the Teachers of Mankind, who had no other Light to follow, were immoral Idolaters or Atheiſts, except two or three, and they raiſed up by the ſpecial Appointment of Providence. Muſt not Nature be a miſerable Inſtructor, that, in ſo many Ages, ſuch diſtant Parts of the World, ſo many Schools of Learning, with ſuch indefatigable Pains as were taken, could produce but two or three, out of Millions of rational Creatures, to have any tolerable Apprehenſions of the divine Nature, their firſt Cauſe, and laſt End? And yet theſe two or three, were ſo far from having any clear Ideas of a Supreme Being, or a Worſhip due to him, that many of their Notions were incompatible, and contradictory to all the Perfections we can conceive of him.

How then can Reaſon be the Origin of Religion, ſince it has neither Conſent, nor Practice, nor a direct Knowledge of any one Truth? Yet all theſe Difficulties are removed, by allowing that divine Things were originally taught by Revelation, the Notices whereof paſſing by Oral Tradition only, in proceſs of time became ſo altered and obſcured, that Mankind had loſt the true Apprehenſions of Things, and could not recover the clear Knowledge

of them without a ſupernatural Aſſiſtance. And that this occaſioned thoſe lame imperfect Accounts of God and Providence, the Souls Immortality and a future State: And was the Reaſon, that the World for two thouſand Years could not exhibit a tolerable Syſtem of Religion, draw up any regular Table of Commands and Prohibitions, or adjuſt the Limits of moral Good and Evil.

To what has been already ſaid concerning the Philoſophers, I ſhall add two Obſervations, as relating to the preſent Inquiry.

Firſt, That their Teſtimony may be allowed as amply in favour of this Hypotheſis as of any other.

Secondly, That none can with Juſtice be appealed to, who lived after the Revelation of the Goſpel. And for the following Reaſons.

Becauſe Chriſtianity made ſuch an amazing Progreſs in the World; that as *Pliny* in a Letter to *Trajan* ſays, it had reached not only the Cities, but the Villages and the Country, and that great Numbers of all Ages, Sexes, and Conditions had em-
Apol.c.36. braced it — As *Tertullian* afterwards boaſted; "We "have filled with our Company all Places except "your Temples." And becauſe the learned Heathens having an inquiſitive Curioſity after all new things, *Acts* xvii. 21. could not fail to inform themſelves exactly of its Doctrines; from whence they received many and great Advantages, in adding a large Stock of new Truths to their former Attainments, in removing Difficulties which till then had been unſurmountable, ſpiritualizing groſs and carnal Opinions, reconciling ſeeming Contrarieties till then never underſtood, clearing up obſcure Fables and Traditions, and above all by engrafting ſublimer Notions into their ancient Theology. All this they did very induſtriouſly, at the ſame time endeavouring by all poſſible means to diſguiſe and conceal whence they borrowed them, that ſuch Acquiſitions

fitions might paſs upon the World for their own. And as the later Platoniſts above all others, were engaged in this Undertaking, they can never be appealed to as proper Witneſſes, in behalf of natural Religion, having ſo much altered what their Fathers profeſſed, and made a thorough Reformation in Philoſophy, by mixing ſo much of Chriſtianity with it.

That they did ſtudy the Scriptures with great diligence, is evident from the many Inſtances in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, of thoſe who in ſpite of their beloved Philoſophy, and againſt all the Prejudices Men generally conceive for the Opinions they have been educated in, after long and mature Deliberation, being convinced of the ſuperior Wiſdom and Divinity of the Goſpel, became its ſincere Diſciples and able Defenders. For not the Multitude only, but Perſons eminent in Station, diſtinguiſh'd for Genius and Learning, Orators, Grammarians, Lawyers, Phyſicians, Philoſophers, ſuch as were skilled in all the Literature and Wiſdom of the World, the moſt judicious and inquiſitive of Mankind, Men of no eaſy Faith, (as *Trypho* derided *Juſtin*) but convinced by the Evidence of Truth, were added daily to the Church: Nor did they, till after a long and diligent Inquiry, give up their former Perſuaſions, and renounce a Catholick Religion eſtabliſhed ſo many Ages, and in whoſe favour they were ſtrongly prejudiced.

In the earlieſt days, the Proconſul *Sergius* and *Dionyſius* the *Areopagite* were of this Number. But to omit many Inſtances, I ſhall only mention *Juſtin Martyr*, whoſe account of himſelf (in the Dialogue with *Trypho*) is very remarkable, and a moſt lively Repreſentation of the Thirſt the Heathens had for Knowledge, together with the little Satisfaction they received from it. And his Relation may deſerve Credit, ſince Antiquity mentions him

as one little behind the Apoſtles either in Time or Virtue. In him we ſee the true Philoſopher, impatient after Wiſdom, laborioufly collecting all the Learning of the Gentile World, yet unſatisfied in his moſt ſerious Inquiries after Truth. He firſt betook himſelf to the Stoicks, where finding no Solution to his Doubts, he went to a Peripatetick, but ſoon concluded that Truth did not dwell with him. Thence to a Pythagorean, who requiring the Preparatory Knowledge of Muſick, Aſtronomy, Geometry, *&c.* he deſerted him, and gave himſelf up to the Inſtitution of an eminent Platoniſt, with whoſe Intellectual Faculties he was greatly taken, and reſolved for ſome time to abandon himſelf to Solitude and Contemplation. He ranſack'd all the Wiſdom of the World, in ſearch of God and Happineſs, tired out, yet found no Peace or Comfort, every Step added to his Anxiety and Deſpair, but brought no Relief to his Mind. Till in his Solitude he met a venerable old Man, who fell into Diſcourſe with him on the Excellency of Philoſophy in general, and Platoniſm in particular, and ſoon convinced him of the Error of thoſe, whom he depended upon as the Bulwarks of Learning, and thought nothing could eſcape their Penetration. It concerns me not, ſays the bleſſed Guide, what *Plato*, *Pythagoras*, or others maintained; he paſſes them by, and inſtructs him in the Nature of God, the Soul, and its certain way to attain everlaſting Felicity. He then directs him to the Prophets, and the Scriptures, where true Wiſdom only can be learned, and here the Diſciple found reſt to his Soul. I found this at laſt, ſays he, to be the only
P. 125. ſure and profitable Philoſophy. He immediately diveſts himſelf of all the human Learning he had collected from the different Schools, and even from his beloved *Plato*; adores his infallible Maſter and his Doctrine, and from the Force of heavenly Truth,

Truth, learned what no Philoſophy could teach any of its Profeſſors, to deſpiſe the Sentence and the Fate of *Socrates*, and become a Martyr for it. They both fell by Poiſon, but with vaſtly different Circumſtances, one in Doubts, Uncertainty, and Ignorance, the other with full Hopes and Aſſurance of a bleſſed Immortality. Such were alſo *Tertullian*, *Minucius*, *Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, &c. all Profeſſors of Science among the Heathens, but by examining the Principles of the Goſpel became its Proſelytes and Advocates. And we may ſafely judge, the other learned Heathens, from being well acquainted with the Scriptures, though they did not become Converts, could not fail of making great advantage by it.

This Plagiariſm the Convert Heathens expreſly charge them with—"That as the Ancients had "borrowed from the Prophets, ſo did the Mo- "derns from the Goſpels." And *Tertullian*, "Which of your Poets, which of your Sophiſters "have not drank from the Fountains of the Pro- "phets? It is from theſe ſacred Sources likewiſe, "that your Philoſophers have refreſhed their thirſty "Spirits; and if they found any thing in the holy "Scriptures, which might hit their Fancies, or ſerve "their Hypotheſis, they took and turned it to a "Compliance with their own Curioſity, not conſider- "ing theſe Writings to be ſacred and unalterable, "nor underſtanding their Senſe. Every one inferring "and reforming as his Fancy led him. Nor do I "wonder the philoſophick Wits play ſuch foul "Pranks with the Old Teſtament, when I find ſome "of the ſame Generation among ourſelves, who have "made as bold with the New, and compoſed a dead- "ly Mixture of Goſpel and Opinion, as philoſophi- "ſing Vanity led them."—So again, he taxes them with mixing their own Corruptions with the Truths they borrowed from the Scriptures, turning them quite

Juſt. Mart. Apol. 1. § 71.

Apol. c. 47.

De Anima c. 2.

quite another way, and making that little Truth a Plea for the reſt of their Errors.

It was from a Converſe with Chriſtians, that *Epictetus* learned to reform the Doctrine, and abate the Pride of the Stoical School. *Philoſtratus* wrote of *Apollonius* to equal his Miracles with thoſe of our Saviour; as *Eunapius* did thoſe of the Sophiſts in oppoſition to the Primitive Chriſtians. So *Celſus* and *Porphyry* ſtudied the Scriptures on purpoſe to contradict them.

But hence proceeded another great Alteration in the Schools of Philoſophy. The World had been overrun with Diſputes, Contradictions, and finding Faults with each other. There was no ſuch thing as a Catholick Philoſophy or Religion, but every one having a natural Right to reaſon for themſelves, pertinaciouſly adhered to, and defended their own Opinion. The Generality of Mankind, however, were divided between the Schools of *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, and the Chriſtians never failed to reproach them with the Diſagreement and Contrariety betwixt them: That both could not be in Poſſeſſion of Truth, and probably neither. That in Philoſophy every thing was obſcure, dark, and inconſiſtent; in Chriſtianity every thing clear, rational, and ſatisfactory: To which may be added another Argument, that its Profeſſors lived above the moſt exalted Notions the World ever had conceived of Virtue.

They ſeeing this Objection, in the preſent Circumſtances of Philoſophy, to be unanſwerable, immediately endeavoured to make it more uniform, enrich it with the Additions of more excellent Truths, and reconcile the Principles of their Founders. It was the Attempt, and indefatigable Pains of many, *Porphyry*, *Boethius*, &c. and among the reſt of *Hierocles*, to ſhew how their Opinions might be demonſtrated to have a perfect Harmony

Ex Photio, p. 3.

and

and Agreement with each other. He indeed would have the World believe, that whoever imagined there was any difference between them, widely miſunderſtood the Senſe of both theſe great Men. He however confeſſes, that ſuch Irregularities continued till the Learning of *Ammonius* ſhone forth upon the World: Who, when he had purged the Opinions of the ancient Philoſophers, proved that *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* in moſt material Points, were vaſtly uniform and agreeable. Therefore he calls him Θεοδίδακτον, one inſtructed of God, who by deſpiſing the various Opinions which brought ſuch Diſgrace to Philoſophy, and thoroughly underſtanding both Sects, had brought them to a Reconciliation, and was enabled to give his Hearers an Hypotheſis free from all Contention and Diſpute. P. 39, & 53.

Hierocles alſo attempted to reconcile the ancient Oracles and prieſtly Laws of *Orpheus*, *Homer*, and all the Predeceſſors of *Plato* in the ſame manner; which was a Task of infinite Difficulty, and what therefore he laid out all his Strength of Underſtanding on, to make their Doctrines tally, and (as he deſcribes thoſe of *Socrates*) to ſtand upright like a Die whichever way they fall. His greateſt Difficulty, after having read the Scripture-Doctrine of the Creation, was how to varniſh over that monſtrous Doctrine of two eternal independent Principles, God and Matter, and reconcile thoſe diſtant Ideas of a Creator and increated Creature. But *Photius*, from whom we have this, ſays, all his mighty Contrivance ended in meer Trifles. P. 47.

It is ſcarce then to be imagined, that the Philoſophers of the ſecond Century, *Marcus Antoninus*, *Maximus Tyrius*, and others were ignorant of the Chriſtian Doctrine. Though the Reformation of Philoſophy received the finiſhing hand from *Ammonius* who lived about the beginning of the third Century, and preſided with great Honour over the *Platonic*

tonic School at *Alexandria*. A Man of ſuch exquiſite Learning, that they thought him inſpired, being thoroughly inſtructed in all the Subtilties of the Pagan, and Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion. When ſuch an one undertook to reform the ancient Philoſophy, to reconcile inveterate Feuds which ſubſiſted till that time between the Schools of *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, it is no wonder, that, with theſe Qualifications, he was able to do it in an extraordinary manner; by paring off Superfluities, rejecting Falſhoods, aboliſhing thoſe Niceties and Cavils which were a Diſgrace to the Profeſſion, and eſpecially by adding many noble Sentiments to it, and thereby propound a more generous and regular Syſtem than the World had yet known.

Porphyry for the Credit of his Religion affirms him to have become an Heathen as ſoon as he ſtudied Philoſophy, and *Hierocles* ſeems to have accounted him ſo; but *Euſebius* and *Jerom* deny it, and teſtify that he died a Chriſtian. And tho' his Scholars were of both Religions, as his Chair was particularly devoted to Philoſophical Lectures, yet it is certain that he taught Divinity alſo, and had among others the great *Origen* for his Diſciple. Nor is it eaſy to conceive, that in an Age when the Power of Godlineſs prevailed in the Minds of Men, and an holy Zeal to inſtruct the World made them prefer Martyrdom to Silence: That ſo great and good a Man ſhould not take all Opportunities of making Proſelytes to the Faith, and inſtruct his Hearers in the Myſteries of the Goſpel, as well as the Speculations of Philoſophy.

If we trace this Matter up a little higher, we ſhall find that the Thirſt after Knowledge had for ſeveral Ages carried Men to the moſt diſtant Perſons and Places, that made a Profeſſion of Learning. Hence *Athens* and afterwards *Rome* became ſo crouded with the *Literati*. But no City enjoyed this Honour

nour with greater Advantages than *Alexandria*. Many of the *Jews* who eſcaped the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, fled to *Egypt:* And Multitudes of them, by *Alexander*'s Favour, ſettled in this new Metropolis. And as the *Egyptians* were naturally inquiſitive after their Myſteries, ſo undoubtedly the *Jews* communicated ſome proper Parts of their Knowledge to them, which afterward became fully opened in that ineſtimable Treaſure, the Tranſlation of the Scriptures by the *Seventy*.

It grew famous alſo for the noble Library founded there by *Philadelphus*, under the Care of *Demetrius Phalareus* (to which *Marc Anthony* added that of *Pergamus*) and the Encouragement its Princes gave to learned Men. The *Ptolemies* invited all the Philoſophers of Eminence to ſettle there, ſo that it might be ſaid, there were only Remains of Learning in other Parts of the World.

At the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, St. *Mark* founded here not only a Church, glorious in its Patriarchs; but alſo a School which in time became the greateſt Nurſery of Philoſophy and the Sciences. They who preſided over it, were the moſt renowned Perſons, admirably verſed in all Learning human and divine, in the Depths both of Pagan and Chriſtian Wiſdom, ſo that it has been called the Univerſal School of the Church. Among its Rectors, was *Pantænus*, an excellent Stoick before he became Chriſtian, and, as *Euſebius* ſays, well skill'd in human as well as divine Learning. He was ſucceeded by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, whoſe Writings ſufficiently prove his extenſive Knowledge in all Parts of Wiſdom. In this number was the great *Ammonius*, the head of Philoſophers in his Age, from whom all thoſe Platoniſts ſtiled ἐκ τῆς ἱερᾶς γενεᾶς, of the ſacred Succeſſion, derived their Notions. Such were *Origen*, *Herennius*, and *Plotinus* the Preceptor of *Porphyry*, as he again was of *Jamblichus*.

Hiſt. Eccl. l. 5. c. 10.

blichus. *Origen* was in ſuch Reputation, that not only Chriſtians but Philoſophers flock'd to his Lectures, wherein, ſays *Euſebius*, he read the Mathematicks, and other parts of Philoſophy, as well as the Scriptures —— and where the moſt important Truths were conſtantly preached, and familiarly expounded, in their catechetical Exerciſes, it is impoſſible but the Subject of them muſt be univerſally known. After *Origen* were *Heraclas*, *Dionyſius*, *Athenodorus*, *Malchion*, and *Didymus* who reach'd to the Year 300.

It was in this School that *Ammonius* undertook the Reformation of Philoſophy, by blending *Platoniſm* and Chriſtianity together, which was afterwards the principal Study of the Heathen Profeſſors, ſuch as *Plotinus*, *Amelius*, *Porphyry*, *Hierocles*, *Syrianus*, *Proclus*, *Marinus*, *Damaſcius*, and others of the ſacred Succeſſion. And he had ſeveral Views therein. Firſt, That whilſt they profeſſed an inveterate Oppoſition to the Scriptures, they were at liberty to ſelect out whatever would ſublimate and refine their own Doctrines. Secondly, Thereby to raiſe the Value of *Plato*'s Philoſophy. Thirdly, To depreciate Chriſtianity; and Fourthly, Eſpecially to reform their natural Theology, and Dæmon-Worſhip, by paring off groſs Abſurdities (at which the reaſon of Mankind was then generally ſhock'd) giving new Interpretations to things, which their Forefathers never thought of: And above all in aſſerting one Supreme Deity, tho' they could not agree in their Notions of him, either who, or what he was.

This tampering however with Philoſophy gave a mortal Wound to Religion, its Beauty was ſullied by ſuch impure Mixtures: And from that bitter and poiſonous Root, all the Errors and Apoſtaſies ſprang up, which have ſince befallen the Church of Chriſt. The Advantage however that redounded to Philoſophy,

ſophy, at the Expence of Chriſtianity, which they plundered and adulterated, is evident from their writing in ſo much a ſublimer Strain, than any of their Predeceſſors had done upon important Truths; ſuch as the Degeneracy of Souls, and their Return to God, the Origin of Evil which had ſo miſerably perplexed the Ancients, of Providence, and eſpecially of the Eternity of Matter, ſo inconſiſtent with a Maker of the Univerſe.

For by advantage of the Scriptures, being come to a certain Knowledge of ſacred Truths, which none before had a Poſſibility of doing, they borrow from them whatever could improve, or be reconciled with their own Syſtems, which they alter, diſguiſe and blend in ſuch a manner, as they hoped no one could know whence they had them. Upon this Stock they grow arrogant, and blame their Predeceſſors in the School of *Plato* for delivering ſome Doctrines, and interpreting others contrary to the Sentiments of their Maſter; though no ſuch Arguments or Conſequences are to be found in any of his Writings. Theſe new Acquiſitions they ſet up, and boaſt of as their own; and after altering, corrupting, and debaſing the Truths of Chriſtianity, pretend there is nothing worth taking from it, at the ſame time they triumph in its Spoils. But the Chriſtians plainly ſaw the Theft, indict them as Plagiaries, and call ſuch Proceedings an adulterous Mixture of Divine Truths with human Inventions. *Veritatis dogmata ad Philoſophicas Sententias adulterare.* That if *Plato* was charged with purloining his choiceſt Doctrines from the Prophets, they did the ſame from the Apoſtles; and this made them ſpeak in a Strain as much above *Plato*, as the Apoſtles did above the Prophets. All their admirable Contemplations and Diſcourſes were not from *Plato*, but from Chriſtian Maſters, and their nobleſt Flights took wing from the Goſpel.

Tertul. Apol. p. 366.

From

From the Notoriety of this it is, that learned Men have oppoſed ſome Errors frequently urged by thoſe who are engaged in advancing Philoſophy againſt Divinity, which has of late been renewed amongſt us, by overvaluing *Platoniſm*, as if it equalled, or in ſome of its Notions even outwent that Revelation, from whence all its admirable Diſcourſes were borrowed. As alſo others, who would inſinuate, that the Fathers of the Church corrupted the primitive Purity of the Goſpel with Philoſophy, and obtruded *Platonick* Euthuſiaſm upon the World, for Faith, Myſtery, and Revelation: Both which oppoſite Opinions are equally falſe and groundleſs, and only advanced by thoſe who would degrade the Goſpel, by putting a philoſophick Livery upon it, or by confounding them together deſtroy all poſitive Religion.

The Application I would make is this; if Reaſon be ſo ſharp-ſighted, as to diſcover all things eſſential to Natural Religion and Morality (as ſo called) How comes it to paſs, that theſe later Philoſophers reached a much higher Elevation, and wrote in ſo much diviner a Strain, than their Maſters did, and excel *Plato* (who for ſo many Ages was the Deity of Reaſon and Virtue) as far as he did the moſt fabulous Theologiſts who went before him, in their Diſcourſes on the Supreme Being, his Attributes, Creation, Providence, Nature, and the Immortality of the Soul, *&c.*? They could not have it from *Pythagoras* or *Plato*, who had made no ſuch clear Diſcoveries; nor had any rational or tolerable Account till this time been given of them; they were Secrets to the Heathens, till they began to ſtudy in the Schools of Chriſtians. From whence one of theſe Conſequences will neceſſarily follow: Either that Reaſon in its moſt improved State, as ſuppoſed in the Ancients (who are allowed to have reached the very Extremity, and utmoſt Limits of human

human Underſtanding) was not able to attain a competent Knowledge of divine Things, for they were ignorant of them. It was a Point beyond *Ariſtotle*'s Logick, wherein Syllogiſm and Demonſtration always fail'd him. And tho' they added new Light to what they received from others, yet *Infelix operis ſumma*, nothing clear, rational, or conſiſtent was delivered of God, the Soul, or Immortality; nothing regularly determined on theſe Subjects; nor was it poſſible there ſhould, having no diſtinct Ideas of them, nor any one that could inſtruct them. And Philoſophy without Evidence, is Knowledge without Science, a Sound without a Meaning—The Profeſſor was *Gloriæ Animal, & popularis auræ vile Mancipium*, a Seeker of Renown, and a Slave to popular Applauſe. And his Profeſſion was *Phalerata magis, quam vera ſapientia, quæ aliena quærit cum ſua neſciat; cæli plagas ſcrutatur, Deum ignorat quem ſolum noſſe deberet.* A gilt Bubble, without Solidity or Uſe, buſy in prying into the Heavens, yet ignorant of God whom alone it ought to have been acquainted with — And the Character *Triſmegiſtus* gave of the *Greek* Philoſophy, was Ἑλλήνων φιλοσοφία, λόγων ψόφος, nothing but a Jargon, and Rattle of Words.

Tertul. Epiſt. ad Jul. & de Anim. c. 1.

Ambroſ.

Or elſe they muſt have been the worſt and wickedeſt of Men, that knowing better would ſtill maintain ſo many Errors and Impieties, and not reſcue the World from the miſerable Bondage of Ignorance, to religious Truth and moral Righteouſneſs.

Or laſtly, Their Succeſſors muſt have had ſome better Guide than Nature or Reaſon to direct them, which was the Goſpel; and therefore cannot be admitted as Witneſſes in a Cauſe, where Natural Religion is to be judged of.

I may add, that this is the very Caſe of modern Infidelity. How comes it to paſs, that their Syſ-

tems are more regular, and their Deductions of Virtue clearer, whence are thoſe ſublimer Duties and Notions, and Principles more ſolid, and better eſtabliſhed, than appear among the Ancients? Are they wiſer than *Socrates* or *Cicero*, is their Capacity of Mind greater, their Study ſeverer, or their Knowledge more univerſal and extenſive? Certainly the very Reverſe, their Art is inferior, but the Materials they had to work upon were better, and therefore their Sacrilege the more notorious. They learned theſe things in the Word of God, and then diſown their Benefactor; they take a great deal of pains to prove what no one denies, that the Exiſtence and Idea of God, with the other great Truths of Religion, are moſt agreeable to the Faculties of the Mind, to Reaſon, and the Light of Nature; and thence draw an inconſequent Concluſion, that they originally were, and ſtill may be, diſcovered by the meer Strength of human Nature, and thus become the Oracles of their own unaſſiſted Reaſon.

And this Fallacy (from a Suppoſition that it exalts the Dignity of human Nature) has been too eaſily admitted, and deceived many; or rather is the whole Support of Natural Religion, as oppos'd to Revelation: That all thoſe Truths and Arguments we now perceive the Certainty and Force of, muſt appear in the ſame Light to, and therefore might proceed from, a mere Philoſopher, or Perſon in a State of Nature. And (with great Submiſſion to the moſt learned Author's Judgment) this Miſtake runs through the whole Delineation of the Religion of Nature; though in the Terms (or even Doubts) that he propoſes it, no Advantages can accrue therefrom to the Enemies of Revelation. Speaking of the Soul's being a Principle of Life,

P. 211. he uſes the following Words—"Here I begin to "be very ſenſible how much I want a *Guide*; but "as the Religion of *Nature* is my Theme, I muſt

at

" at preſent content my ſelf with that Light which " *Nature* affords; my Buſineſs being, as it ſeems, " only to ſhew, what a Heathen *Philoſopher* with- " out any other help, and almoſt αὐτοδίδακτος, " may be ſuppoſed to think. I hope that neither " the doing of this, nor any thing elſe contained " in this *Delineation*, can be the leaſt Prejudice to " any other *true* Religion. Whatever is immedi- " ately *revealed from God*, muſt, as well as any " thing elſe, be treated of as being *what it is*: " Which cannot be, if it is not treated with the " higheſt regard, *believed* and *obeyed*. That there- " fore, which has been ſo much inſiſted on by me, " and is as it were the Burden of my Song, is ſo " far from undermining true *revealed Religion*, that " it rather paves the way for its Reception."

I ſhall only obſerve from this Paſſage, that if no other Arguments were intended to be offered, but what an unaſſiſted Philoſopher may be ſuppoſed to think; yet his Book is an entire Confutation of any ſuch Suppoſition; we can only know what they could do by what they did do, except any will be ſo ungenerous to ſay, they did not do their beſt. And no Philoſopher (notwithſtanding their many external Advantages) was able to diſcern the Nature or Meaning of theſe Truths, or did with any Degree of Clearneſs ſhew the Dependence of them on the firſt Cauſe, their Connexion with each other, or the Conſequences deducible from them, in any or all of their Writings; and this very Author did not put Truth in the Light he has done, by the Light of Nature, without any other help; but (whether, or no, he ſaw or acknowledged it) was entirely beholden to Revelation.

On the whole, nothing is here ſaid, that can be a Reflection on the Ancients, except their not being able to perform Impoſſibilities be one; they were Men of inſatiable Thirſt after Knowledge, and their

Lactant. L. 3. p. 210. Attainments in it prodigious. Their Learning and Improvement of whatever was within their reach, is admirable, it was every thing except Divine. They diſcovered many Truths, but not ſuch as were above the Attainment of mere Mortals. Their Deſires and Endeavours were laudable, but could not have the wiſh'd-for Effect, to diſcern what Truth was, nor where, or by what means to be found. For whatever they knew, they remained ignorant of the true God, to know whom is the only Wiſdom. We may therefore and ought to conclude them fallible, and reject their Errors, without being apprehenſive that any Damage will thereby enſue to Religion, for that cannot be the Conſequence by *Cicero*'s own Rule. *Nec verò (id enim diligenter intelligi volo) ſuperſtitione tollenda, Religio tollitur.* Divin. L. 2. n. 72.

I ſhall at preſent add but one Argument more in favour of this Hypotheſis. That as the only ſure Rule to judge what Reaſon or Nature can do, is by what they have done, ſo this muſt be determined by known Facts, which is a ſafer Method to guide our Enquiries, than any unwarrantable Preſumptions or Suppoſitions poſſibly can be. And ſince it is conſtantly affirmed, That the Heathens had no other Light to guide them but naked unaſſiſted Reaſon, which is mere Suppoſition and Preſumption, becauſe they might receive their Knowledge another way, therefore the Aſſertion has a Poſſibility of being falſe, or in other Words is a real Uncertainty—I ſhall therefore appeal to unqueſtioned Facts, to Hiſtory, and the Writings of the earlieſt Philoſophers; all which unanimouſly confeſs, they had their Knowledge of divine Things by Tradition, not Invention, delivered from their Fathers, or borrowed from others; and to ſet aſide the beſt, the only Evidence to be had (undoubted Facts, with the Confeſſion of the Parties concern'd)

concerned) by Suppoſitions and Surmiſes, calculated to ſupport any favourite Syſtem, is againſt all the Rules of Argumentation.

To clear up this Point is the principal Intent of the following Treatiſe: For if the Ancients had but a very weak imperfect Knowledge of Divine Things, and the utmoſt Certainty they could attain to in them, was extremely doubtful and precarious; the Conſequence (I ſhall not fear) will be, that Reaſon and Nature are very inſufficient Guides to Religion, to Duty, and to God. And if it afterwards ſhall appear that they received all their Knowledge by Inſtruction, it will be eaſily traced up, and by neceſſary Deduction follow, that the firſt and only Inſtructor of Mankind was God; and that all the Senſe the World ever had of Religion, whether Poſitive, Natural, or Moral, muſt be referred to, and entirely depend on Revelation.

CHAP. II.

Of the Inlets to Knowledge.

NOW the firſt Point to give us any Satisfaction in this Inquiry, muſt be to conſider the true Condition of Man, as he is a reaſonable Creature or intelligent Being; and how he comes to be ſo. What the ſeveral Inlets of Knowledge are, whereby the Mind is furniſhed with Materials to think, judge, and exerciſe its ſeveral Operations on; that we may thereby ſee the Extent of its Views and Powers, and be the better able to judge of the Queſtion before us, *viz.* Whether the ſole Light of Nature and Reaſon were ſuf-

ficient to diſcover, and inſtruct the World in Divine Truths?

Tho', methinks, it may be ſome Abaſhment to Reaſon, and that vaſt Perfection to which ſome would extol it, that it ſcarce knows what Man or Itſelf is; for were theſe Points evident and certain, there could not have been ſuch a Variety of Opinions among wiſe Men concerning the true Definition of Man, his End, and Means of Knowledge.

Some, from obſerving the wonderful Sagacity in Brutes, ſomething in them ſo like Reaſon, have been induced to make Religion the diſtinguiſhing Character of Man, there being a kind of natural Propenſity to it, *Quo omnes duce Naturâ vehimur*, ſays *Tully*. But this is contradicted by other Philoſophers, who make Brutes, eſpecially Elephants, capable of Religion.

Some define Man to be a moral Agent, or a free intelligent Being, as having a Power to act, or not to act, and thereby able to give an Account of his Actions, and be ſubject to Rewards and Puniſhments, which are the final End of Man. And Lord *Herbert* was of this Opinion, That we are more diſtinguiſhed from Brutes by Free-will, than by Reaſon.

Anaxagoras, according to *Ariſtotle* and *Plutarch*, thought Man to be the wiſeſt Creature, becauſe he had Hands.

The Peripateticks and Stoicks defined Man to be a Compound of Body and Soul. The *Platoniſts*, a divine Mind chain'd down in an earthly Priſon: One made the Mind a Part, the others the Whole of Man.

But the generally prevailing Definition is, That Man is a Creature endued with Reaſon; that being the Faculty which diſtinguiſhes him from others, or conſtitutes him what he is, an intelligent Being.

But

But here again to prove how remote we are from Perfection, it need only be obſerv'd, That tho' Man evidently has this Faculty, and it is the peculiar Excellence and Glory of his Nature, yet we know not what it is, nor can Reaſon, that aſpires to define every thing, define itſelf: We can only explain it by Effects and Operations; but how, or in what manner they are produced, are not able to conceive; nor wherein the inward Operations of the Mind conſiſt; what its Freedom, Power, and Choice are; how we apprehend or think; or how this thinking Being within us, by its free Action, can cauſe and determine ſuch voluntary Motions, as we are convinced that Thought alone produces in us.

The principal Operations of this Faculty ſeem to be,

Firſt, To perceive and apprehend what is offered to it.

Secondly, To conſider ſuch Object according to the different Views or Circumſtances it may appear in, uniting, ſeparating, or comparing it with others already known, reflecting on its Nature and Cauſe, its Tendency and Effects, 'till the Mind attain a clear and diſtinct Knowledge of it.

Thirdly, To examine the Connexion of one Truth with others, and by Deduction from thoſe which are known and evident, diſcover the Certainty or Probability of other Truths or Propoſitions it did not ſo clearly perceive before. And thence,

Fourthly, To fix its Judgment, or Degrees of Aſſent that ought to be given, which muſt in all Caſes vary according to the Evidence that appears. Where the Connexion is clear, the Mind will approve and acquieſce in it, as Knowledge or Science, whereof it can have no Diſtruſt. Where the Connexion is but probable, the Aſſent will be ſuſpended, becauſe the Inference is doubtful, and the Conclusion

Cic. Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 12.

cluſion on either Side no more than Opinion. If there appears a Diſagreement in this Connexion, then the Illation manifeſts it to be a Falſhood, and the Mind cannot but reject it. And the Perfection of our intellectual Faculties conſiſts in rightly uſing the intermediate Steps, that may enable it to diſtinguiſh between Evidence and Opinion, Probability and Certainty. And the moſt exalted Reaſon is no more than the Diſcernment of Truth and Falſhood.

Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 15.

Yet if we come to examine the Rules by which Mankind give their Aſſent to many Propoſitions, differing from and contradictory to each other, we cannot think the Procedure of the Mind to be a very eaſy, or ſure Performance. The Bounds of Truth and Falſhood have never yet been ſettled; one is aſſured of what another is diffident; Evidence in *Egypt* is but Probability at *Athens*. And by all Experience and Hiſtory, we find there has been ſo little Exactneſs or Certainty in the Concluſions of Mankind, that they ſeem to be the Reſult of Inattention, Paſſion, or Intereſt, rather than proceeding on any ſound Principles, or in any rational Method of Argumentation for the Diſcovery of Truth.

From whence ſuch Perplexities and Errors, ſuch Miſtakes and Falſhoods have been propagated in the Minds of Men, ſo much Miſchief done in the World by Reaſon, that it was a Doubt to *Cicero* whether it were a Bleſſing to Mankind or not: For the great Misfortune has been, that Men took that for Light which was real Darkneſs; yet followed it as bewildered Travellers do the *Ignis Fatuus*, which leads them to Precipices and Ruin. It has been Reaſon only that rendered Mankind in all Ages ſo ſhamefully unreaſonable; and Philoſophy was the Guide to all Errors under the Sun; and what Right Reaſon, the ſo much boaſted

Nat. D. l. 3. n. 37.

of

of ὀρθὸς λόγος is, remained a Queſtion undetermined.

II. Man was created to Practiſe, as well as to Know. He has a Law given him, the fulfilling of which is the Perfection and End of his Being; and as he is a free Creature, has a Power to weigh, reject, or chooſe the Means conducing thereto; for in being at perfect liberty to act or not to act, conſiſts the Freedom of Human Will, and ſuch Election makes an Action his own, becauſe he wills and chooſes it, is able to give Reaſons for his Determinations, to declare the Cauſe or Motive which influenced him to prefer one Counſel or Action before another, and thereby becomes accountable to the Lawgiver, and liable to the Sanctions of the Law, Rewards or Puniſhments. This Freedom of Will makes him a moral Agent; to chooſe Means fit and proper to attain his End, is Moral Goodneſs; to chooſe ſuch as are contrary to the Law and perfective End of his Being, is Moral Evil: And theſe two Faculties, the Reaſon and Will, conſtitute Man what he is, a Free Intelligent Being. *Virtus tota noſtra eſt, quia poſita eſt in voluntate faciendi bona —— Sicut Virtus non eſt, bonum ac malum ſcire; ita Virtus eſt, bonum facere, malum non facere.* Lactant. l. 6. p. 514.

And as the Intellect is conſcious of its own Operations, and from comparing the Action with the Law, perceives its Agreement or Diſagreement therewith; from hence ariſes another Power called Conſcience, or the internal Judgment of a Man's own Mind, of the moral Rectitude or Pravity of what he has done; and this ſo eſſential to, and inſeparable from the Mind, that it can never ceaſe to be ſelf-conſcious, 'till it ceaſes to think.

The Sanctions of this Internal Law and Judgment are, either a ſecret Pleaſure from having acted according to the perfective Principle of our Beings; or

or having done what, as moral Agents and rational Creatures, was fitteſt for us to do: Or a Shame and Reproach for having abuſed the Freedom of Will, in doing what, as Men, we ought not to have done, and approving that which our own Mind condemns and forbids.

For when Men have uſed the utmoſt Means in their Power to inform themſelves in the Nature of Duty and of Sin, they are a Law, a Rule of Living to themſelves. Their Conſciences alſo (by judging of the moral Tendency of their Actions) bearing witneſs, and their Thoughts (or inward Reaſonings) mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another; acquitting or condemning them, according as they have acted conformably to the greateſt Light of their Mind, and the Law of their Being.

Nor have the Thoughts and Opinions of Men been leſs divided, concerning the Means whereby the Intellect is ſupplied with its Stores of Knowledge; what are the ſeveral Inlets of the Mind, whereby it is furniſhed with ſuch Variety of Materials to think, reflect, or judge upon, and what its different kinds of Notices are. One would imagine that no Point could be more obvious to Reaſon, than to look into itſelf, and at once declare all its real ways of coming at Knowledge; yet nothing has embarraſſed it more, than to find out the Doors by which its own Furniture was brought in, as appears from the different Hypotheſes, and many Volumes which have been wrote upon this Subject. And yet a right Determination of it, or a certain Account of the Avenues and Ways whereby our Underſtandings come to attain thoſe Degrees of Knowledge we have, would be of the higheſt Service to Truth, and ſhew us the Part which Man bears in the intellectual World, more clearly than any other Conſiderations or Arguments whatſoever.

Of

Of theſe different Inlets I ſhall mention Four, as being the moſt principal, and to which the others may be reduced.

1. Innate Ideas, or Principles ſtamped and engraven on the Soul immediately by God.

2. The Inſtincts, or natural Propenſions.

3. Senſation, or Ideas of external Objects conveyed by the Senſes; under which, in a larger Meaning, Inſtruction may be included, as comprehending all thoſe Parts of Knowledge, which the Mind receives from the Information of others by the help of the Senſes, in which conſiſts the Difference between Inſtruction and Illumination.

4. Reflexion, or the inward Operations of the Mind.

I ſhould ſcarce have mentioned theſe Ideas, they are ſo unphiloſophical, and void of all Foundation in Reaſon or Nature, did we not find them perpetually lurking under this Debate, in the Expreſſions of Knowledge connatural and coeval, common Notions, clear Impreſſions of God on the Conſcience, *&c.* That the Ideas of Wiſdom, Virtue, Vice, *&c.* muſt needs ſpring up from the active Power and Fecundity of the Mind itſelf, becauſe the corporeal Objects of Senſe can imprint no ſuch things upon it. Others are afraid that learned Men have gone too far in their Diſputes againſt theſe Ideas, for that nothing is meant by them, but ſuch a Senſe or Knowledge as Men may have without any other Monitor but their own naked unaſſiſted Reaſon, from a Conſideration of the Works of Creation, *&c.* which is a different Means of Knowledge, and the Argument an Equivocation, in tacitly affirming and denying the ſame thing.

Cudworth Morality, l. 4. c. 2. p. 149.

The ſtrict Maintainers of theſe Ideas ſay, That there are ſome primary Notions and general Principles of the Law of Nature, ſo indelibly ſtamped and impreſs'd on the Soul of Man, that it receives them

them in its very firſt Being, and brings them into the World with it; ſo that the Mind cannot but neceſſarily perceive, know, and aſſent to them as diſtinct and actual Propoſitions; and readily expreſſes and utters them as ſoon as it arrives at the Uſe of Speech and Reaſon, without further Inſtruction or Meditation.

But this Opinion is perplexed with ſuch Difficulties, ſo contrary to Obſervation and Experience, and utterly incapable of Proof, that it is almoſt univerſally given up by learned Men, both Divines and Philoſophers, as an unwarrantable Fiction, a kind of Magick to ſolve all Doubts, and throw down all Objections we know not why, nor how, and introduced only to ſupport Doctrines which Men could not ſcientifically account for. Before any Principle is admitted, it ought to have all the Demonſtration the Mind can require, and carry ſuch Marks of Truth and Certainty, that no reaſonable Objections lie againſt it. Yet inbred Notions, occult Qualities, and the like, are to ſtand inſtead of Evidence, muſt admit no Doubts or Objections, however liable to them; muſt ſtop every Inquiry about them, as, Whether all Men receive them with an univerſal and full Conſent? Whether they are equally known and attainable by all? Upon what Arguments they are founded; or, Whether they may not be come at by ſome other Operations of the Underſtanding, or Means of Knowledge? For any Propoſition, call it innate, undoubted, univerſally acknowledged, or ſelf-evident, if liable to any of theſe Objections, is no Principle, but the mere Effect of Ignorance, and intended to ſuppreſs the uſe of Reaſon.

The Original, however, of this Opinion was probably owing to ſome Expreſſions of the Ancients, and Texts of Scripture, neither of which will bear ſuch Senſe or Interpretation.

I. Phraſes

I. Phraſes of this kind are common among the *Greeks:* Thus *Plato*, κατὰ φύσιν τὸν νόμον, *the Law of Nature*; and *Iamblichus* in latter Ages, περὶ θεῶν ἔμφυτος γνῶσις, *an inbred Knowledge of the Gods*, and σύμφυτος αὐτῶν κατανόησις, *a Perception of them born with us*; and *Chryſoſtom*, ἔμφυτον ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις ἐπίνοιαν, as alſo, ἁπλῆν, πρεσβυτάτην περὶ θεῶν ξυγγενῆ; and *Clemens Alexandrinus*, Θεὸν ἔμφασιν Φυσικήν. And among the *Latins*, to mention only *Cicero*, *Inſitas eorum, vel potius innatas cogitationes habemus*; and, *Omnibus enim innatum eſt, & in animo quaſi inſculptum, eſſe Deos*; That the Belief of the Exiſtence of the Gods was born with every one, and as it were engraven on the Mind.

Repub. 5. p. 456. § 1. c. 3. de Myſter.

Nat. D. L. 1. Id. c. 4.

The Antiquity of this Perſuaſion, and its being coeval with our Souls, proceeded from ſeveral Cauſes or Miſtakes.

1. The obſerving that we did not come by this Knowledge, as we do by other Parts of Learning; that it is ſomething ſuperior to the Mind of Man, ancienter than our Judgment or our Will, prevents Reaſon and Demonſtration, what we cannot prove or diſprove at our pleaſure: And therefore not being able to find out its true Source, they concluded it eſſential to, and coeval with our Beings.—Or, 2. Men finding themſelves at a loſs to ſolve the Manner of our conceiving immaterial and heavenly Things, would not give way to ſuch a Thought, as that we ſhould conceive them by the Help and Intervention of any thing in this World, there appearing no Congruity or Proportion between them; and therefore had recourſe to innate Ideas for that purpoſe, which ſhould be the Objects of the pure Intellect, independent of all Senſation, diſcovering ſome early Notices in the Mind, which *Plato* ſays they ſucked in with their Mothers Milk, and not knowing by what Inlet they were received, concluded them connate and coeval. 3. They could not diſcover it was ever

Proced. of Human Underſt. V. 1. p. 89.

ever originally delivered by any one Man to the reſt of Mankind, or who thoſe were who firſt invented this Notion, That there is a God; therefore concluded it natural and innate. 4. This was a Conſequence of what they believed concerning the Souls Original: That they were Portions of God, according to *Pythagoras*, of their very Divinity and Mind, ſays *Cicero*; or with the Stoicks, of the Mind univerſal and Soul of the World, which was with them the Supreme Deity; and pre-exiſting from Eternity, enjoyed a ſpiritual intellectual Life, in converſing with the Gods and one another; whence their Knowledge graſped whatever is in the Nature of Things, and what they could not loſe during their ſeveral Tranſmigrations.——And this is the Ground of *Plato*'s famous Doctrine of *Reminiſcence*:

Timæus c. 8.

Diog. Laert. Vit. Zeno.

Meno. p. 81.

"For, *ſays he*, As the Soul is immortal, and frequently returns to Life, and ſees whatever paſſes in this World and the other, there is nothing which ſhe has not learned. Whence it ſhould not ſeem ſtrange, that ſhe is able to call to mind what ſhe has formerly ſeen of Virtue and other things: And there being a Relation throughout Nature, and the Soul having learned every thing, nothing can hinder a Man who recalls but one thing to his Memory, which we call Learning, to find out every thing elſe, if he apply his Mind to it; for to inveſtigate and learn, is nothing elſe but *Reminiſcence*." And again, Knowledge is the Reminiſcence of thoſe things the Soul ſaw when it was with God.—On theſe Conſiderations, the Heathens might conclude there were original Principles, or an innate Knowledge which the Soul brings into the World with it.

Phædrus, p. 249.

II. There are alſo ſome Texts of Scripture, whereon, it is ſaid, theſe innate Ideas may be grounded, as *Romans* ii. 15. where St. *Paul* mentions the Law written in the Hearts of Men, even Heathens.

To

To which it is anſwered, That a principal Diſtinction between the *Jews* and *Gentiles* was, that one had a written Law, the other not: That before the Age of *Moſes*, the whole World was ſubject to the ſame general Law, as it had been given to *Adam*, *Noah*, &c. from God, and by them delivered to their Poſterity, who were ſubject to the Sanctions of it, in Rewards and Puniſhments, which in juſtice they could not have been, except it had the Force of a Law, and received ſufficient Promulgation. Thus the Patriarchs were juſtified in obeying, the *Sodomites* and others condemned for diſobeying the Law delivered to them; and After-ages had theſe general Notions of Duty and Sin providentially continued down to them, to keep Conſcience and the inward Senſes of the Soul awake, and thereby render them excuſable or inexcuſable.—And all the ancient Commentators underſtood theſe Words ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη, *for when the Gentiles*, &c. *Romans* ii. 14. of thoſe who lived before the Law, as *Melchiſedeck*, *Job*, &c. or who repented as the *Ninevites*, or who had learned the Worſhip of the true God, as *Cornelius*. This was their νόμος ἄγραφος, *unwritten Law*, for the Heathen World had no other: *Draco*'s were the firſt (and thoſe chiefly political ones) committed to Writing in *Greece*, about 624 Years before Chriſt; and a Moral Syſtem was not attempted, till *Socrates* taught it, and *Xenophon* and *Plato* recorded his Sentiments. Whitby in Loc.

But Secondly, The wiſeſt Writers on the Law of Nature interpret theſe Texts as a figurative Expreſſion, and implying no more than a clear and certain Knowledge treaſured up in the Memory, of which the Perſons ſpoken of are convicted in their own Conſciences, by what Means ſoever theſe Notions entered into their Thoughts. And to write in the Mind, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γράφειν, *& ſcribere in animo*, was a Phraſe in common uſe with the *Greeks* and *Latins*, Puffendorf Law of Nat. L. 2. c. 3. § 13.

as

as well as the holy Penmen both of the Old and New Teſtament.—*Solomon* frequently uſes the Expreſſion, *Prov.* iii. 3. *My Son, write them upon the Table of thy Heart.* So again, vii. 1. and *Jer.* xvii. 1. *The Sin of Judah is written with a Pen of Iron, and with the Point of a Diamond, it is graven upon the Table of their Heart.* Not that Sins were thus originally engraven, but were ſo heinous that the Memory of them could never be obliterated. So *Ezek.* xiv. 3. *They have ſet up their Idols in their Heart*, to denote their inward Affection for Idolatry.—Thus St. *Paul, Ye are our Epiſtle written in our Hearts, known and read of all Men.* And again, *Ye are the Epiſtle of Chriſt, written not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God.* And *Heb.* viii. 10. *I will write them in their Hearts.* All which can import no more, than any Truth's being made clearly known to them, and the Law ſo plainly taught, as to be eaſily perceived by them all, that whenever they tranſgreſſed it, their Conſciences ſecretly condemned them for it.

Thirdly, If we conſider the Perſpicuity and Evidence wherewith the almighty Framer of our Beings could have impreſſed and manifeſted his perfect Law to the Minds of Men, and this had been the only Method of diſcovering his Nature and Will to us; then the frequent Revelations he afterwards made, would have been uſeleſs, or contrary to his own Purpoſe of Acting; and the Knowledge of Divine Affairs would have been much more diſtinct and clear among the Gentiles, than it appears to have been, or is repreſented in the Holy Scriptures, where their defective Knowledge in theſe Truths is deſcribed, and in that very Chapter, *Rom.* ii. 19. *as blind as thoſe who ſit in Darkneſs, as Children and Babes.* To remedy which, to reſtore and fulfil the Law then become utterly depraved and corrupted, was one great Intent of the Goſpel. Innate Ideas therefore

therefore have no Foundation in theſe Texts, are repugnant to innumerable Paſſages in Scripture, contrary to Fact and Experience, and the Proceedings of God with Men. Had their Light been clear and perfect, ſuch would be the Obedience demanded of them; but theſe were Times of Ignorance, and God required it not; and it would be inconſiſtent with the Divine Equity to condemn his Creatures for not obſerving impoſſible Conditions: But it was the not doing what they might have done, the *holding Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*, the not chooſing Virtue and avoiding Vice according to the Sufficiency of Aid they had received, but committing thoſe Actions which their Conſciences condemned them for, that render'd them totally inexcuſable.

Fourthly, Therefore, the κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, thoſe common Notions or Principles they had, were only traditional Notices of the Univerſal (and conſequently Moral) Law, ſcatter'd up and down among the Gentiles, but were to them the Meaſure of Good and Evil; for by reaſon of theſe being fix'd in their Conſciences, they are ſaid to *be a Law unto themſelves*, as having this inward Rule to direct their Actions by. Theſe *Zeno* called καταλήψεις, *Comprehenſions*, and *Epicurus* προλήψεις, which *Cicero* renders *Anticipations*, but may be called alſo *Opinion*, or *Perſuaſion*. Theſe were ἐντολαὶ αἱ κατὰ νόμον τε καὶ πρὸ τοῦ νόμου, *Precepts of Law, and before the Law*, for ὅτε τοὺς πρὸ νόμου ἀνόμους εἶναι, *even thoſe before the Law, were not without a Law.* Cl. Alex. Strom. 7. p. 704. D.

And in this Senſe the wiſeſt Heathens ſeem to have underſtood it. Thus *Xenophon* repreſents the Opinion of *Socrates*: That as to unwritten Laws, received over the whole Earth, which it was impoſſible that all Mankind (as being of different Languages, and could not be aſſembled in one Place) ſhould make, that theſe were given us by the Gods; and that no Man impunibly violates a Law eſtabliſhed Mem. loc. L. 4. p. 165.

liſhed by the Gods; That the Laws of Morality are the Work of a more excellent Legiſlator than Men; and whatever Force the Laws have, they receive it from the Gods. And this was a Maxim which *Socrates* always maintained, *That Virtue was a Science*, i. e. *not inbred, but to be learned like any other.*

Diog. Laert. Vit. Plat. 288.

So *Plato* defines the unwritten Law to be ὁ κατὰ ἔθη γινόμενος, *that which proceeded from Cuſtom*, i. e. Actions conformable to the common Notions of Mankind; and this ſeems to be the true Meaning of his τὸ τῆς φήμης, *the Law of Fame or Report*; which, tho' by *Serranus* and others interpreted *of the Power of Conſcience*, with him a kind of Dæmon in Men, plainly refers to thoſe traditional Truths Oral Fame had handed down to them, which he ſo often appeals to, and grounds all his Doctrines of Theology on; and not on any inward Signature or Impreſſions. And he was one of thoſe great Minds, whom God in different Ages raiſed up, by Travel and Searches, to collect the ſcatter'd Fragments of Truth, and become the Teachers and Inſtructors of Mankind. So that, amidſt a general Corruption, there was a Light that ſhone in Darkneſs, by a due Attention to which they might have made a ſtronger Diſcernment, and paſſed a truer Judgment upon Things. And their Crime was, the not obeying Truth, according to the Aids of Knowledge afforded them, nor the Degrees of Conviction they were under.

Vid. Gale, 134.

Theſe active internal Principles were the Law of Mankind, not that which is written in Books, or engraven on Wood, but ἔμψυχος ὢν ἑαυτῷ λόγος, *the living Reaſon in every Man's Heart*, always alive and watchful together with it, and never ſuffering the Mind to be without a Director. And from a Senſe of theſe (which were univerſally extended to ſome more, to others leſs) and the ſelf-reflective Acts of the Mind, which are called Conſcience, proceeded

Plutarch. ad Princip. Indoct.

ceeded thoſe Stings and Remorſes, on committing what they themſelves condemned. This *Laius* in the Tragedy confeſſes:

Vid. Cl. Alexand. Strom. 2. p. 388.

Δέλητον ἐσθλὰ τῶνδε μ', ὧν σὺ νουθετεῖς, &c.

All theſe things which you adviſe me, I already know, but notwithſtanding this Knowledge and Conviction, Nature hurries me away. And *Medea*, Καὶ μανθάνω, &c. which *Buchanan* thus tranſlates:

Euripid. Act. 4. p. 206.

Videoque quantum perpetrabitur nefas,
Sed peſſimorum facinorum genitor furor,
Ratione major, me retrorſum diſtrahit.

And *Ovid* in *Metamorph.*

——— aliudque cupido,
Mens aliud ſuadet: video meliora proboque,
Deteriora ſequor.———

All which are a full Comment and Explanation of *Rom.* ii. 14, 15, &c.

Fifthly, Innate Ideas cannot prove the Truth of any Propoſition, becauſe every Man has as good a Right to deny, as others to affirm them. And this probably was the Reaſon why *Epicurus* appealed to them, in order to deceive the World with a popular Argument, and leave the Exiſtence of the Gods on a Footing which he knew could never be maintained. *Cicero* ſtates it at large in the Senſe that *Epicurus* underſtood it; that without the Idea of a thing we can neither conceive, ſpeak of, nor diſpute about it. That all Men and Nations have an Idea and Notion of the Gods, independent of Learning, is an Opinion not derived from Education, Cuſtom, or Human Law, but is the firm unanimous Perſuaſion of all Mankind. It is therefore from Notions implanted in our Souls, or rather innate, that we conceive there are Gods; for that in which

Nat. Deor. L. 1. N. 43, 44.

the Nature of all Men agrees, muſt neceſſarily be true. Some have unwarrantably urged this Argument under the Name and Authority of *Cicero*; tho' he only introduces it as the Opinion of a particular Philoſopher or Sect, and immediately denies the Principle on which it is grounded, that of *Univerſal Conſent: Equidem arbitror multas eſſe gentes ſic immanitate efferatas, ut apud eos nulla Deorum ſuſpicio ſit.* He verily believed there were many Nations ſo ſavage as not to have the leaſt Notion of a God. And when he uſes it in any part of his Works, it is not as a Proof, but to take the Exiſtence of the Gods as granted, which muſt otherwiſe be perpetually proved. *Si hoc non probas, à Deo cauſa ordienda eſt.*

Creed, p. 18. For theſe and many other Reaſons, "The wiſe "and ſober Men of all Parties (*ſays our excellent "Biſhop* Pearſon) are agreed, that the Soul of Man "has no connatural Knowledge at all, not even of "a Deity: No particular Notion of any thing in "it from the Beginning. But that as we can have "no Aſſurance of its Pre-exiſtence, we may more "rationally judge it to receive the firſt Apprehen-"ſions of Things by Senſe, and by them to make "all rational Collections." If then the Soul of Man be at firſt like a fair ſmooth Table, without any actual Characters of Knowledge imprinted on it; if all the Knowledge we have comes ſucceſſively by Senſation, Inſtruction, or rational Collection; then muſt we not refer the Apprehenſion of a Deity to any connate Notion or inbred Opinion; at leaſt we are aſſured that God never charges us with the Knowledge of him upon that account.

The ſame Judgment is paſſed on theſe Ideas by the wiſeſt Philoſophers and greateſt Maſters of Reaſon. *Puffendorf, L. 2. c. 3. § 13.* affirms ſuch original Characters to be no more than unwarrantable Fictions: That the Readineſs which we ſee in Children, and

and in the ignorant Multitude, to diſtinguiſh Right from Wrong, is owing in a great meaſure to Exerciſe and Uſe, whilſt from their early Years, and the firſt Opening of the Reaſon, they obſerve good things to be approved of, and evil things to be exploded. As for the loweſt Degree of Mortals, who are acquainted with the Law of Nature, chiefly by popular Information and by common Uſe, they ought to require no further Proofs of its Certainty, than that, 1. The Exerciſe of it is maintained by their Superiors, by whoſe Authority they are to be guided. And then, 2. That they themſelves cannot find any probable Reaſons, by which they might either confute or weaken its Force. And, 3. Becauſe they are every day ſenſible of its Uſefulneſs, and the Benefits which it confers upon Mankind. And upon this account, the Law of Nature appears to be ſufficiently promulgated; ſo that no Perſon of competent Years, and of ſound Underſtanding, can by any means plead invincible Ignorance of it.

Which is not only giving up theſe original Impreſſions, but at the ſame time affirming the far greateſt Part of Mankind to be incapable of making a due Uſe of their Reaſon: That they muſt depend upon others, to know what is right or wrong; and in the Matter of Duty and Sin be determin'd by another's Judgment, not their own: For tho' they have Reaſon, yet not being able, through the Exerciſe of it, to arrive at Certainty, the ſafeſt Method of preſerving themſelves from Error and Miſtake, is to ſubmit to Authority, and rely on Information.

But he who has enquired with the greateſt Accuracy into this Subject, and given ſuch Reaſons againſt admitting theſe Ideas, as yet remain (and I believe ever will) unanſwered, is the great Mr. *Locke*, in the Beginning of his *Eſſay upon Human Underſtanding*, which every one may conſult that is deſirous of a

thorough Satisfaction in this Point. I ſhall only mention the Heads of ſome of his Arguments.

The Falſeneſs of ſuch Suppoſition, *he ſays*, ſufficiently appears, by ſhewing how Men may arrive at Certainty without any ſuch original Notions or Principles, it being unreaſonable to attribute ſeveral Truths to the Impreſſions of Nature and innate Characters, when we may obſerve in ourſelves Faculties fit to attain as certain and eaſy Knowledge of them, as if they were originally imprinted on the Mind. *He obſerves*, That the Argument drawn from *Univerſal Conſent*, on which it principally is founded, has this Misfortune in it, that if it were true in matter of fact, that there were certain Truths wherein all Mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if any other way can be ſhewn how Men may come to that univerſal Agreement in the Things they do conſent in, which he preſumes may be done. But the worſt is, this Argument ſeems a Demonſtration, that there are no ſuch innate ſpeculative Principles, becauſe there are none to which Mankind give an univerſal Conſent; for if Children and Idiots have not the leaſt Apprehenſion or Thought of them, it deſtroys that univerſal Conſent, which muſt needs be the neceſſary Concomitant of all innate Truths; it being a Contradiction to ſay there are Truths imprinted on the Soul, which it perceives or underſtands not: For if they are not Notions naturally imprinted, how can they be innate? and if they are imprinted, how can they be unknown? and if known, they muſt be conſcious of them; otherwiſe Truths may be imprinted on the Mind, which it never did, nor ever ſhall know, which is to make this Impreſſion nothing. Or if the Capacity of Knowing be the natural Impreſſion contended for, then all the Truths a Man ever comes to know will be innate, and it is only an improper way of affirming what no one denies, that the Mind

Mind is capable of knowing ſeveral things; the Capacity innate, the Knowledge acquired. But if Truths can be imprinted on the Mind without being perceived, or in the Underſtanding, and not be underſtood, it is all one as to ſay, any thing is, and is not, in the Mind or Underſtanding. Nor will anſwering, that Men know and aſſent to them when they come to the Uſe of Reaſon; prove them innate; becauſe then whatever Reaſon certainly diſcovered, would equally be ſo: And whatever general Truths require the Uſe of Reaſon for the Diſcovery of them, cannot be innate; for Reaſon is the Faculty of deducing unknown Truths from Principles or Propoſitions already known, and can amount to no more than this, that they are never known or taken notice of before the Uſe of Reaſon; but whether they may be aſſented to after, or when, is uncertain: And ſo may all other knowable Truths, and conſequently by this Note none can be proved innate. Nor is the Time of coming to the Uſe of Reaſon, the preciſe Time when they are firſt taken notice of; but to aſſent to them is the Exerciſe of Reaſon, and therefore the Suppoſition falſe. Nor will their being aſſented to, as ſoon as propoſed, prove them to be ſuch; it may be a Mark of Self-Evidence, when Men, upon firſt hearing and underſtanding the Terms, aſſent unto them, as that one and two are equal to three, *&c.* which nevertheleſs are not innate; or if ſuch Aſſent be a Mark of it, we muſt allow Millions of Propoſitions in the Sciences to be ſo, as many as Men have diſtinct Ideas of, or can make Propoſitions wherein different Ideas are denied of one another. The moſt univerſal Maxims not being known till they are propoſed, proves them not to be innate. Nor is there a Propoſition whoſe Terms or Ideas were either of them innate, and conſequently nothing in any Propoſition that is ſo. When Children are capable of Thought, Knowledge, and Aſſent, yet are they ignorant of the moſt general Truths, which they

could not be, if Nature had imprinted any ſuch; it being not imaginable that they ſhould perceive the Impreſſion from Things without, and be at the ſame time ignorant of thoſe Characters which Nature itſelf has taken care to ſtamp within. Can they receive, and aſſent to adventitious Notions, and be ignorant of thoſe which are ſuppoſed woven into the very Principle of their Beings, and imprinted there in indelible Characters, to be the Foundation and Guide of all their acquired Knowledge and future Reaſonings? This would make Nature take pains to no purpoſe, or at leaſt to write very ill, ſince its Characters could not be read by thoſe Eyes, which ſaw other things very well. It being impoſſible that any Truth which is innate, ſhould be unknown to one who knows any thing elſe; ſince if they are innate Truths, they muſt be inward Thoughts, there being nothing a Truth in the Mind which it has never thought on. Whereby it is evident, if there be any innate Truths, they muſt be neceſſarily the firſt that appear there, the firſt of any thought on. Nor can ſuch general Maxims be allowed innate, becauſe if theſe Characters were native and original Impreſſions, they ſhould appear faireſt and cleareſt in thoſe Perſons, in whom yet we find no Footſteps of them: For Children and illiterate People being of all others the leaſt corrupted by Cuſtom or borrowed Opinions, and nothing ſuperinduced to confound thoſe Characters Nature had written, one might reaſonably imagine that in their Minds thoſe innate Notions ſhould lie open fairly to every one's View, as 'tis certain the Thoughts of Children do. It might very well be expected, that theſe Principles ſhould be known to Naturals, for being (as is ſuppoſed) ſtamped immediately on the Soul, they can have no Dependence on the Conſtitution, or Organs of the Body, the only confeſſed Difference between them and others. And all theſe native Beams of Light ſhould, in thoſe who have no Arts of Concealment, ſhine out in their full Luſtre,

Luſtre, and leave us in no more Doubt of their being there, than we are of their Love of Pleaſure and Abhorrence of Pain. And yet there are no general Maxims, no univerſal Principles of Knowledge, to be found in the Thoughts of Children, or any Impreſſions of them on the Minds of Naturals.

And if ſpeculative Principles have not an actual univerſal Conſent from all Mankind, it is much more viſible concerning practical Principles, there being no Inſtance of any one moral Rule which can pretend to ſo general and ready an Aſſent, as the former. The Reaſoning and Exerciſe of the Mind to diſcover the Certainty of moral Principles, the Ignorance wherein many are of them, and the Slowneſs of Aſſent wherewith others receive them, are manifeſt Proofs of their not being native Impreſſions, or ſuch as offer themſelves to View without ſearching. Nor are there any moral Principles wherein all agree; no practical Truth univerſally received without doubt, or being queſtioned, not even the moſt extenſive Principle of Juſtice and keeping Contracts. And if it be ſaid, that the tacit Aſſent of their Minds agrees to what their Practice contradicts, it is anſwered, that Actions are the beſt Interpreters of Thoughts: And if ſome Men have queſtioned and denied theſe Principles, it is impoſſible to eſtabliſh an univerſal Conſent; and if practical Principles terminate not in Operation, and produce Conformity of Action, they are in vain diſtinguiſhed from ſpeculative Maxims; for if there were certain Characters imprinted by Nature on the Underſtanding to regulate our Practice, we could not but perceive them conſtantly operate in us, as we do thoſe others on the Will and Appetite, which never ceaſe to be the conſtant Springs and Motives of all our Actions, to which we perpetually feel them ſtrongly impelling us.

Ano-

Another Argument is, that all moral Rules want a Proof; nor can one be propoſed, whereof a Man may not juſtly demand a Reaſon; for their Truth plainly depends upon ſome antecedent to them, and from which they muſt be deduced; which could not be, if either they were innate, or ſo much as ſelf-evident, which every innate Principle muſt needs be, and not need any Proof to aſcertain its Truth, nor want any Reaſon to gain it Approbation. And if a Reaſon be asked of any the moſt undeniable Rule in Morality, Men will give it according to the different Sorts of Happineſs they have a Proſpect of, or propoſe to themſelves: An ancient Philoſopher would give one Reaſon, a Chriſtian another, an Atheiſt a third: And hence naturally flows the great Variety of Opinions concerning moral Rules, which could not be, if they were imprinted on our Minds immediately by the Hand of God.

And if we judge of Mens Thoughts by their Actions, we ſhall find they have no ſuch full Perſuaſion of the Certainty or Obligation of theſe Rules. Even the great Principle of Morality, to do as one would be done to, is more commended than practiſed. If Conſcience be urged as checking us for ſuch Breaches, and ſo the internal Obligation and Eſtabliſhment of the Rule preſerved; It is anſwer'd, that Men may, by the ſame way that they come to the Knowledge of other things, come to aſſent to ſeveral moral Rules, and be convinced of their Obligation, without being written on their Hearts; from Education, Company, and Cuſtoms of their Country; which Perſuaſion howſoever got, will ſerve to ſet Conſcience on work, which is nothing elſe but our own Opinion or Judgment of the moral Rectitude or Pravity of our own Actions. How then can Men tranſgreſs theſe moral Rules with Confidence and Serenity, were they innate and ſtampt upon their Minds?

Minds? View but a Chriſtian Army at the ſacking of a Town, and ſee what Obſervation or Senſe of moral Principles, or what Touch of Conſcience for all the Outrages they do: Robberies, Murders, Rapes, are the Sports of Men ſet at Liberty from Puniſhment and Cenſure. The greateſt Enormities and Inhumanities have been practiſed by many Nations without Remorſe, without being ſcrupled or condemned: Where then are theſe innate Principles of Chaſtity, Juſtice, and Piety, or where that Univerſal Conſent that aſſures us there are ſuch inbred Rules? And if Conſcience be a Proof of innate Principles, Contraries may be innate, ſince ſome Men with the ſame bent of Conſcience proſecute what others avoid, and have Remorſe for doing or omitting what others think they merit by: That there is ſcarce a Principle of Morality to be named, or Rule of Virtue thought on, which is not ſlighted and condemned by whole Societies of Men, governed by practical Opinions, quite oppoſite to others.

Whatever practical Principle is innate, cannot but be known to every one, to be juſt and good, becauſe naturally imprinted on their Minds. It is therefore little leſs than a Contradiction, it is impoſſible, that whole Nations of Men ſhould publickly renounce, what every one of them certainly and infallibly knew to be a Law; to be juſt, and right, and good; and what all Men they had to do with, muſt contemn and abhor them for: So that whatever practical Rule is, in any Place, generally and with allowance broken, cannot be ſuppoſed innate, becauſe it is not a Rule or Principle, that does upon all Occaſions excite and direct the Actions of Men; nor is it a Truth naturally imprinted as a Duty, without ſuppoſing the Ideas of God, Obligation, Puniſhment, and a Life after this, to be innate; which they muſt all be, if any Thing as a Duty be ſo; which they certainly are not;

not; it being impoſſible that whole Nations ſhould ſerenely, without Shame or Fear, break a Rule, which they could not but evidently know that God had ſet up, and would certainly puniſh the Breach of. But the Difference among Men, in their practical Principles, utterly takes away this Mark of general Aſſent, to find out any moral Rule by: They who maintain them, tell us not which they are; and were there any ſuch, there would be no need to teach them: ſuch Propoſitions ſtamped on the Mind would be eaſily diſtinguiſhed from other Truths, and nothing could be more eaſy to know, what, and how many they were. For were there any Difference, it would plainly evidence there are none.

Lord *Herbert* has ventured to give a Catalogue of them, but there are numberleſs Propoſitions, that even by his own Rules have as juſt a Pretence to ſuch an Original, as the five he mentions; nor in each of them are all his Marks of common Notions to be found. In ſome the Words are uncertain in their Signification, and the Things they ſtand for, difficult to be known, and therefore an uncertain Rule for the Conduct of Life, and unfit to be aſſigned as an innate practical Principle. Nor indeed can any be imagined, or be of Uſe, unleſs the particular Meaſures and Bounds of all Virtues and Vices were engraven on Mens Minds alſo, which no one pretends to; and that God ſhould engrave Principles in Words of uncertain Signification, does not ſeem poſſible. Nor will it be of any Moment to ſay, that by Education, Cuſtom, and general Opinion, they may be darkned, and at laſt quite worn out of the Minds of Men. For this Aſſertion quite takes away the Argument of Univerſal Aſſent. Nor is it to be reconciled, that there ſhould be ſome Principles, which all Men do acknowledge and agree in; yet none of thoſe Principles, which are not by depraved

praved Cuſtom and an ill Education blotted out: which is to ſay that all Men admit, yet many deny and diſſent from them. And if they are capable of being altered or loſt, we ſhall be as much in the Dark and Uncertainty as if there were no ſuch Thing at all; it being all one to have no Rule, and one that will warp every way; and amongſt various and contrary Rules, not to know which is right.

Yet there are many Opinions received by different Men, as unqueſtionable Principles, whoſe Truth is never doubted, which from their Abſurdity, and Oppoſition to each other, it is impoſſible ſhould be true. Nor is it wonderful, if we conſider with what Veneration Men generally ſubmit to Notions, however falſe or ſuperſtitious, which they firſt entertained and have always been educated in, and being what they can find in themſelves no Original of, conclude them innate, the Impreſs of God and Nature. And as moſt Men have ſome reverenced Principles, on which they found their Reaſonings, ſo there are few, who are not expoſed by their Ignorance, Lazineſs, Education, or Precipitancy to take them upon Truſt. Many have neither Leiſure, Parts nor Will, to examine ſeriouſly their own Tenets, much leſs dare they venture to diſſent from the received Opinions of their Country or Party; and above all will be afraid to queſtion thoſe Principles, which they think are Standards ſet up by God in their Minds, to be the Rule and Touchſtone of all other Opinions.

By theſe means it comes to paſs that Men worſhip the Idols they have ſet up in their Minds, grow fond of the Notions they have been long acquainted with; ſtamp the Characters of Divinity upon Abſurdities and Errors, and think no Gods but their own are to be worſhipped. Wanting Time or true Helps to penetrate into the Principles of Knowledge, and trace Truth to its Fountain and Original, they take up

up with borrowed Principles, which never venturing to examine, they may take any Abſurdity for an innate Principle, and (by long poring on the ſame Objects) the Monſters lodged in either Brain, for the Images of the Deity.

Nor can there be any Principles innate, except the Ideas which make up thoſe Truths be innate alſo; for where the Ideas themſelves are not, there can be no Knowledge or Aſſent, no mental or verbal Propoſitions about them. And it is certain theſe are not born with Children, therefore there was a time, when the Mind was without them, and the Knowledge of ſuch Propoſitions could not be born with us. One may perceive how Ideas come gradually into their Minds, and they get no more, nor any other, than what Experience, and the Obſervation of Things that come in their way, furniſh them with. If there be any innate Principle, this is certainly one, that it is impoſſible for the ſame thing to be, and not to be: Yet the Ideas of Impoſſibility and Identity are ſo remote from the Thoughts of Infancy and Childhood, that many grown Perſons will, upon Examination, be found to want them. And if ſuch Ideas be a native Impreſſion, they will be ſo clear and diſtinct, as to be univerſally known, and naturally agreed on, or they cannot be the Subject of univerſal and undoubted Truths, but will be the unavoidable Occaſion of perpetual Uncertainty.

That God is to be worſhipped, is without doubt as great a Truth as can enter into the Mind of Man, and deſerves the firſt Place among all practical Principles; yet it can by no means be thought Innate, unleſs the Ideas of God and Worſhip be Innate. That the Idea, the Term Worſhip ſtands for, is not, in the Underſtanding of Children, a Character ſtamped on the Mind in its firſt Original, will be eaſily granted by any one, that conſi-

ders

ders how few grown Men have a clear and diſtinct Notion of it. And there cannot be any thing more ridiculous, than to ſay, that Children have this practical Principle innate, and yet know not what that Worſhip is, which is their Duty.

But if any Idea can be imagin'd innate, the Idea of God may, of all others, for many Reaſons be thought ſo, ſince it is hard to conceive, how there ſhould be innate moral Principles without an innate Idea of a Deity. Without a Notion of a Law-maker, it is impoſſible to have a Notion of a Law, and an Obligation to obſerve it: Yet there always have been and ſtill are Perſons and Nations who have no Notion of a God, no Religion. Or had all Mankind every where the Notion of a God, it would not from thence follow, that the Idea of him was innate: For tho' no Nation were to be found, without a Name and ſome few dark Notions of him, yet that would not prove them to be natural Impreſſions on the Mind, no more than the Names of Fire or the Sun, do prove the Ideas they ſtand for to be innate, becauſe the Names of theſe things and the Ideas of them are ſo univerſally receiv'd and known amongſt Mankind: Since the Notion of a God might be otherways diſcovered, and the Suitableneſs thereof to the Principles of common Reaſon; and the Intereſt Men will always have to mention it often, muſt neceſſarily ſpread it far and wide, and continue it down to all Generations. But if the general Acknowledgment of it be ſufficient to prove the Idea innate, it will alſo prove the Idea of Fire to be ſo, ſince there is not a Perſon in the World, who has a Notion of God, who has not alſo the Idea of Fire. If it be urged that it is ſuitable to the Goodneſs of God that all Men ſhould have an Idea of him, and therefore it is naturally imprinted, the Argument will prove too much. For if we may conclude that God hath done

done for Men, all that Men ſhall judge beſt for them, it will follow, that he has not only imprinted an Idea of himſelf, but all that Men ought to know or believe of him; all that they ought to do in Obedience to his Will, and that he hath given them a Will and Affections conformable to it. This is better for Men, than that they ſhould in the dark grope after Knowledge; as St. *Paul* tells us, all Nations did after God, *Acts* xvii. 27. than that their Wills ſhould claſh with their Underſtanding, and their Appetites croſs their Duty. But the Goodneſs of God hath not been wanting to Man, ſince he hath furniſh'd him with other means to attain the Knowledge of him, and the things that concern him. And can it be thought that the Ideas Men have of God, are the Characters and Marks of himſelf, engraven in their Minds by his own Finger; when we ſee that in the ſame Country under one and the ſame Name, Men have far different, nay often contrary and inconſiſtent Ideas and Conceptions of him? Their agreeing in a Name or Sound, will prove no more, than that God imprinted on the Minds of all Men, ſpeaking the ſame Language, a Name for himſelf, but not any Idea, ſince thoſe People who agreed in the Name, had at the ſame time far different Apprehenſions about the thing ſignified, which is an infallible Evidence of their Ignorance, and that they had no true Notion of him. If on the whole the Idea of God be not innate, there can ſcarce any other be found, that can pretend to it. And our Minds being at firſt void of that Idea, which we are moſt concern'd to have, is a ſtrong Preſumption that it muſt be ſo of all others.

II. Some, and thoſe very wiſe Men, to whoſe Judgment I pay the greateſt deference, make the Inſtincts another Inlet of Knowledge to the Mind of Man, which I muſt confeſs my ſelf unable to apprehend;

prehend; and beg leave to diſſent from them for the following Reaſons.

Firſt, Becauſe the Inſtincts, or thoſe inward Motions and Propenſions we find within us, are ſo engrafted in the Nature of Man, that whatever Notion or Idea they convey of themſelves, it muſt be Innate, and reduce us to acknowledge what is on all hands confeſs'd to be unphiloſophical and abſurd.

Secondly, The Appetites, ſuch as Hunger or Thirſt, Deſire or Averſion, are only certain Modifications, Motions, or Impulſe of Matter and Spirit, which Impulſe we feel, but do not conceive nor can form any Idea of it. And whatever Uneaſineſs they create, it ſeems confin'd to the Ideas of thoſe Objects which excite it, as Hunger is a Senſe of the Want of Meat, and Thirſt of Drink, *&c.* And all Propenſions to alleviate them are confined to the Ideas of thoſe things which the Imagination ſuppoſes would give the moſt immediate Relief. So of Averſions or Natural Antipathies, I cannot conceive any Idea of them, till ſome one will delineate the Picture he has in his Mind, at ſtarting or fainting on the Sight of a Cat, or a Piece of Cheeſe, and ſhew it to be different from the Ideas of thoſe very Objects. Beſides, the Inſtincts are altogether involuntary, no way depending on the Will, nor have any Relation to the rational Faculties, but wholly to the Animal ones. No Reflexion can excite or abate them; it is impoſſible for a full Stomach to imagine itſelf faſting; and whether full or faſting, there is no Addition, Diminution, or Alteration, made to the pure Intellect.

Thirdly, If we join the Paſſions with Inſtincts, they are no more than the Effect of a corrupted Nature; Commotions raiſed in the Mind from a violent Agitation of the Blood and Animal Spirits, what the Philoſophers called an irrational and preternatural Motion of the Soul, πάθος, ἄλογος ψυχῆς κίνησις

κίνησις ϗ παρὰ φύσιν: And by *Cicero*, *Perturbatio*, *Commotio animi*, *Appetitus vehementior*, &c. And ſo far from being an Inlet to Reaſon, that they blind and ſhut it up, pervert and diſturb its Operations, but never regulate them; and in the ſame Degrees that any Perſon is ſubject to them, ſo far is he deprived of Reaſon.

Fourthly, Paſſions and Inſtincts, tho' they are the great Law of the Brute-Creation, for preſerving their Exiſtence, and continuing their Species, which at all times and without varying they obſerve and purſue, as the greateſt Direction to the End of their Beings; and whatever Rationality they have, it never reſiſts or perverts them: Yet in Man it is far otherwiſe, they diſturb his Freedom, bias his Will, diſtract his Reaſon, miſlead his Affections; and are the Cauſe of all moral Evil, either chooſing Means which have no Relation to his End, or are deſtructive of it. And tho' to correct and keep them within proper Bounds and Regulation, affords an ample Field for Reaſon to exert it ſelf, and is the proper Notion of Ethics or Morality; and in Societies has occaſioned ſo many Laws to reſtrain their Licentiouſneſs, and prevent the Diſorders which proceed from them; yet they are no conſtituent Parts of Knowledge any more than Robbers or Pirates, againſt whom we take proper Caution to defend Ourſelves. And ſo far from being an Inlet to Wiſdom, that they are the Conveyors of Ignorance and Error to the Mind, as they are the greateſt Cauſe of all that Sin and Miſery which overſpreads the World.

Fifthly, An Idea muſt be conformable to ſome real Exiſtence; but we are entirely ignorant of the Eſſence, Modes, Powers or Subſiſtence of Inſtincts or Paſſions; and can no more deſcribe the Inſtincts in Man, than we can that of the Needle to the Loadſtone; therefore no Idea can have any Conformity

formity to them. A Tree has a natural Power or Inſtinct to grow upwards, and a Stone to fall downwards; we know it is their Nature, the Will of him that form'd them; but what that Nature is, we cannot in the leaſt declare. And if no Object is conveyed by them to the Intellect, no Materials, Ideas or Notions, added to the Imagination, they cannot be a Duct or Inlet to the Mind; but a Man would be as wiſe without, as with them.

That they are not a Canal for any clear immediate Ideas, appears from the numberleſs Definitions or rather Deſcriptions of them, no two Perſons agreeing in their Manner, Cauſes, Appearances, or Effects; which could not happen, if any certain determinate Ideas were affix'd to them. No one is able to inform another, what Modifications produce, or what Senſations accompany them. He knows and feels there is an inward Commotion (perhaps of the Blood and animal Spirits) but he cannot by any Notes or Marks frame a diſtinct Conception of their Appearance or Exiſtence in the Mind, any further than as they are compounded of Ideas from ſuch ſenſible things as excite them; in Deſire or Averſion, in Love, Hatred, Fear, *&c.*

The Soul operates upon the Body, and ſo do certain Objects on the Imagination, but they are too remote and ſubtle for Apprehenſion. We cannot form a Thought or Notion of them, nor how ſuch Force, Impulſe or Motion acts upon the Mind. They are amongſt thoſe hidden Cauſes, to which, as being indiſcernible, we cannot affix any Ideas; nor are they to be collected from the Effects, which vary according to the Temperament and Conſtitution of Bodies. As for Inſtance, a guilty Fear produces in ſome Tremblings, in others Faintings, in one a Redneſs, and in another a Paleneſs; and conſequently there cannot be any immediate original ſtanding Pattern or Idea of them.

Upon the whole, Inſtincts are Natural, but what Man, as a rational or moral Agent, has no clear Diſcernment of, nor Dominion over. He may correct, but can neither deſtroy, nor prevent them: They riſe up without giving us notice, and ſubſide not, when, or how we pleaſe, as depending on neither of our Superior Faculties, the Reaſon or the Will; but are merely animal Appetites or Inclinations, as diſtinct from the Intellect, as the Body is from the Soul. The leſs a Man has of them, the better and wiſer is he; nor can they in any explicit Senſe be a Conduit to Truth, or Inlet of real Knowledge to the Underſtanding; ſo the more he has of them, the nearer is he to the Beaſt, and the further removed from all the intellectual Parts of Nature.

III. The great Inlet of Knowledge to the Mind, is by the Senſes: Either by the direct Impreſſion of external Objects, when the Ideas conveyed are immediate and adequate, ſo that the Mind knows the whole of them: Or mediately, by the Intervention of ſome other Agent, who inſtructs it in the Knowledge of thoſe Beings and Things, which are inviſible, immaterial, and not cogniſable by the Senſes. Even this Information the Mind receives by the help of the Senſes, yet cannot form any Idea of them (for becauſe of their Remoteneſs, Subtilty, and Undiſcerniblenes, it cannot know them adequately, or in the whole) but only ſome Thought, Notion, or Conception of them. And theſe are the only natural Means of coming at Knowledge; for Illumination is ſupernatural, when the Mind is taught by an immediate Act or Communication of God himſelf, without any Inlet or Uſe of the Senſes. But by Inſtruction ſhe learns the Knowledge of divine abſtracted Subjects, with the help of Language, whereby the Thoughts of one Mind already informed of them, are communicated,

nicated, through the Canal or Inlet of the Senſes, to another Mind.

For if the Mind has no innate Knowledge, or Original Impreſſions ſtamped upon it, but is as white Paper without any Characters wrote thereon; then all the Objects it becomes acquainted with, muſt be adventitious and extrinſecal, and there can be no natural Inlet for them, but through the Senſes. So that all its Notions or Ideas, whatever it perceives, thinks of, or is employed about, that is, all its Materials of Reaſon and Underſtanding, are conveyed to the Intellect through or by their Mediation. Nor can it poſſibly be furniſhed with them any other way (except by Inſpiration, which is ſupernatural and miraculous) but would always remain a perfect Blank; as the Soul in a Body originally deprived of all its Senſes, muſt neceſſarily be.

Nor is this a modern Suppoſition, but the common Doctrine of the Ancients. *Ariſtotle*, that Prince among Philoſophers, ſays, the Mind without the Senſes is ὥσπερ γραμματεῖον ᾧ μηδὲν ὑπάρχει ἐνδεχεία γεγραμμένον, like a Tablet on which nothing is yet wrote, but capable of having all things written; which receptive Power is declared by the addition of the word ἐνδεχεία: and he elſewhere aſſerts, that he who is deprived of any Senſe, muſt neceſſarily want the Knowledge of ſome things. So *Epicurus*, πᾶς γὰρ λόγος ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἤρτηται, all Reaſon has its beginning, or is taken, from the Senſes. And *Strabo*, ἡ διάνοια ἐκ τῶν αἰσθητῶν συντίθησι τὰ νοητά, the Underſtanding forms all its Notions from what the Senſes offer. *Cicero* is full of this Doctrine, *Quicquid animo cernimus, id omne oritur à ſenſibus*: That whatever we diſcern in the Mind, took its Riſe from the Senſes. And ſpeaking of Reaſon with its different Operations, which alone render us more excellent than Brutes, *nam & ſenſibus eadem omnia*

De Anima l. 3. c. 4.

Apud Laert.

L. 2. p. 117. c.

De fin. l. 1. n. 19. Vid. Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 7, 10, 12.

De Leg. l. 1. n. 10.

omnia comprehenduntur, all theſe things are comprehended from the Senſes. So again at the End of his *Timæus*, he aſcribes the Knowledge of the moſt excellent Things in Wiſdom and Philoſophy, of Nature and the Gods, to be owing to our Senſes. *Rerum enim optimarum cognitiones nobis oculi attulerunt.* And among the elder Chriſtians, to mention no more, *Lactantius* has many Expreſſions to this Purpoſe. *Scientia non eſt intus in nobis, ſed ad nos extrinſecus venit.* Knowledge is not from within our ſelves, but derived to us from without: which can be only through the Senſes.

L 6. p. 514.

For (as a learned Author argues) our Senſes, though common to us with Brutes, are the only Source and Inlet of thoſe Ideas, which are the entire Ground-work of all our Knowledge both Human and Divine. Without Ideas of ſome ſort or other, we could have no Knowledge at all; for to know a thing is to have ſome Repreſentation of it in the Mind; but we cannot think, nor be conſcious of thinking, till we have ſome Idea or Semblance of an Object to think upon; and without our Senſes we could not have one Internal Idea or Semblance of any thing without us. So that we muſt lay down that Maxim of the Schools as univerſally true, without any Reſtriction or Limitation; *Nihil eſt in intellectu, quod non prius fuit in ſenſu.*

The Imagination is a common Store-houſe and Receptacle of all thoſe Images, which are tranſmitted through the Senſes; and till this is furniſhed in ſome degree, the Soul, while it is in the Body, is a ſtill, unactive Principle; and then only begins to operate, and firſt exert it ſelf, when it is ſupplied by Senſation with Materials to work upon. Theſe are the ſole Foundation on which we raiſe all our whole Superſtructure of Knowledge; and all the Diſcoveries we can make in things temporal

temporal or ſpiritual, together with the moſt refined Notions of them in the Mind of Man, take their Riſe originally from Senſation.

At our Birth the Imagination is entirely a *Tabula raſa*, or perfect Blank, without any Materials either for a ſimple View, or any other Operation of the Intellect. We are not furniſhed with any Innate Ideas of things material, or immaterial; nor are we endued with a Faculty or Diſpoſition of forming purely Intellectual Ideas or Conceptions independent of all Senſation: Much leſs has the human Soul a Power of raiſing up to it ſelf Ideas out of nothing, which is a kind of Creation; or of attaining any firſt Principles excluſive of all Illation, or conſequential Deduction from Ideas of material Objects; without which the Mind of Man, during its Union with the Body, could not have arrived even to a Conſciouſneſs of its own Operations or Exiſtence.

Daily Experience ſhews us, that as far as Perſons are from their firſt Infancy deprived of any of their Senſes, they are ſo far imperfect in their Intellectuals. What a vaſt Degree of Knowledge do we find cut off together with that one Senſe of Hearing? Take away the Sight likewiſe, and conſider how limited and confined the Operations of the Intellect muſt be. If after this you remove from a Man all Taſte and Smelling, and if he hath no Ideas left for the Mind to work upon but thoſe of his Feeling; how far would he differ from a Senſitive Plant? The Mind in ſuch Caſe would not be able to infer the bare Exiſtence of any thing external to it, but what was felt; and if it were poſſible for the Man to have animal Life without Feeling, he would be as utterly void of Knowledge, as one in a Swoon or Apoplectick Fit.

For there can be no Ideas in the Mind, before Senſation, or the Senſes have conveyed them into

it, there being no other Intercourſe or Communication betwixt the Object and the Faculty. And Thought and Reaſon gradually improve, or the Mind thinks more, as it has Matter to think on. But whilſt the Spirit is in Conjunction with the Body, if we remove from it all Ideas of Senſation, the whole Superſtucture of Knowledge falls to the ground. For it is abſurd to ſay, either that the pure Intellect can ſupply it ſelf with Ideas; or that it can think, when it has nothing to think of.

L. 2. c. 1. §. 2. This is alſo what Mr. *Locke* affirms on the ſame Subject: that the Mind of Man has all its endleſs and various Materials of Reaſon and Knowledge from Experience: In that all our Knowledge is founded, and from that it originally derives it ſelf; which is certainly true, as our Obſervation is employed about external, ſenſible Objects. But what he adds to theſe of Ideas of Reflexion, as if any new Stock of Materials or Ideas were produced in the Imagination by its own Actings or Operations, is contrary to Experience, to Reaſon, and Nature; it being impoſſible that the Mind ſhould come at the Knowledge, Perception, Notion, or Idea of any Being that has a real Exiſtence, but through the Mediation of the Senſes.

The Mind has indeed a native Power of Self-Reflexion and internal Operation: Like the Stomach it can receive Food, and digeſt it; but it muſt be given to it, it cannot feed it ſelf. No more can the Mind, by any Power it has, raiſe or create new Objects; it can remember, compare, divide and compound what it has received; but not make the leaſt Addition thereto. It can work upon, tranſpoſe and view them in different Lights, the better to form its Judgment; but their Nature is not alter'd, they are ſtill the ſame. View, review, and divide Ideas of Senſation a thouſand times over, and they will after all be no more than mere Ideas of Senſation.

ſation. No Magick of Reflexion or Abſtraction can make Inviſibles out of Viſibles, or form immaterial Subſtances out of material ones; any more than a Chymiſt can extract Gold from Mud, or a Statuary cut a marble Image out of Wood. The Statues of *Phidias* might be the moſt beautiful in the World, but he made them of the ſame Ingredients as others did, and which his Art could not alter. And if their Form was Divine, though he had not a *Jupiter* or *Minerva* to carve them by; yet was it no Creature of his own making, nor would his Imagination have directed his Hands, if it had not received thoſe Impreſſions from the different Objects he had before been converſant with. The Acts of the Mind are as regular and plain, as of any other Agent; and if we would but attend to them, there could be no need of having recourſe to Miracles for any Article of Knowledge we find it in the Poſſeſſion of; it is eaſy to know how we came by it. But to ſay it makes Ideas, or contains what it never received, is juſt as preternatural, and as true, as that the Artificer makes the Materials he builds a Houſe with; firſt produces, and then puts them together.

The Imagination is only a capacious Store-Room, capable to receive a vaſt quantity and variety of Goods of every kind and from every place; but is quite empty till they are brought into it; the Merchant then ranges them in their ſeveral Claſſes and Orders, as is moſt convenient for Uſe; but cannot by any Alteration, Change, or Mixture increaſe his Stock, or produce a Subſtance that was never conveyed thither. The Intellect does the ſame, it ranges its Ideas in their ſeveral Cells, ſo as to remember where to have recourſe to them, but by no Operation of its own can add a freſh Stock or Supply; this, the Senſes and no other Vehicle can bring. For to ſay, the Mind can furniſh

furniſh itſelf with Ideas, is the ſame Abſurdity, as for Merchandiſe to grow up in the Store, or Furniture in a Houſe without coming in at the Doors or Windows. Nothing can be taken out of the Imagination, that was not firſt extrinſecally lodged there; all that the Intellect can do, is to ſort its Materials, and work ſome of them (as a Carver may the ſame Block) into a great Variety of Forms, according to the Perfection of its Skill. But the Materials are juſt the ſame, no way eſſentially alter'd, though the Form is; nor by any Alembick or Art can it diſtil Spirit from Body, or extract Incorporeity from what is Corporeal.

For the Truth of this we need only appeal to every one's Experience; Let him examine his Thoughts, and try whether he has any original Ideas, that are not the Objects of his Senſes. Notwithſtanding all he has heard of Immateriality, let him, if he is able, abſtract from all Senſation or Impreſſion of material Objects, look inward, and ſee if he can find one ſimple Idea independent of it, for the Mind to exerciſe any of its Operations upon. It is impoſſible; or if any ſuch Inſtance is pretended to be offered, it will be eaſy to ſhew the neceſſary Connexion it hath with Senſation, and the Dependence it has upon it.

This, I ſay, will plainly appear to any one that will try the utmoſt Extent of his Thought, whether the moſt lively Imagination can form an Idea of any thing, but upon the pre-exiſtent ones of Senſation: In the moſt fictitious Ideas, the *Entia Rationis*, which have no Exiſtence but in the Underſtanding, though the Mind can compound many Ideas together, and ſo frame a Being which really never was in Nature; yet there are no new Ideas here, tho' the Compoſition be ſo; for if they had not been all ſeparately repreſented before, it could not have joined them together in its Apprehenſion.

The

The Series is very natural and eaſy; we cannot know a thing without perceiving it, nor perceive it but by ſome Idea or Reſemblance of it; nor can the Mind have any Repreſentation of Objects without it, but through the Senſes: Not of human ones, but by Impreſſions made on them; nor of divine ones, but by ſome Similitude or Correſpondence with them, which Repreſentations are conveyed to it by Inſtruction through the Senſes: But in no ſenſe can the Intellect ſet up a Mint of its own, for the coining of new Ideas.

It has been preſumed, and with great Juſtice, that the Power of raiſing up to itſelf Ideas, without the Preſence or Impreſſion of any Object whatſoever, is perhaps a Privilege of the Divine Intellect alone; anſwerable to the almighty Power of Creation, or producing a Thing out of Nothing. But the Power of the Mind in our little World, is much the ſame with that of Man in the greater World. It is as impoſſible for it to raiſe up to itſelf any ſimple Idea entirely new and independent of all Senſation, as it is for a Man to add one Particle to the common Maſs of Matter: Though it muſt be confeſſed to have a wonderful Sagacity in working upon what it finds already ſtored up in the Imagination.

As the Imagination then is the Store-houſe, ſo are the Senſes the only Window, Door, or Inlet, whereby any Light or Furniture is admitted into it; and if theſe were from the firſt ſtopped up and cloſed, it would for ever remain a dark and empty Void: Yet when we come to examine what is contained in it, we ſhall find a moſt eſſential Difference between the Notices which are lodged there. If we ſurvey the whole Syſtem of Beings, we may divide them into two kinds, Material and Immaterial, for there is no middle Species. Of the firſt of theſe, which are the direct Objects of Senſation, we may behold

furniſh itſelf with Ideas, is the ſame Abſurdity, as for Merchandiſe to grow up in the Store, or Furniture in a Houſe without coming in at the Doors or Windows. Nothing can be taken out of the Imagination, that was not firſt extrinſecally lodged there; all that the Intellect can do, is to ſort its Materials, and work ſome of them (as a Carver may the ſame Block) into a great Variety of Forms, according to the Perfection of its Skill. But the Materials are juſt the ſame, no way eſſentially alter'd, though the Form is; nor by any Alembick or Art can it diſtil Spirit from Body, or extract Incorporeity from what is Corporeal.

For the Truth of this we need only appeal to every one's Experience; Let him examine his Thoughts, and try whether he has any original Ideas, that are not the Objects of his Senſes. Notwithſtanding all he has heard of Immateriality, let him, if he is able, abſtract from all Senſation or Impreſſion of material Objects, look inward, and ſee if he can find one ſimple Idea independent of it, for the Mind to exerciſe any of its Operations upon. It is impoſſible; or if any ſuch Inſtance is pretended to be offered, it will be eaſy to ſhew the neceſſary Connexion it hath with Senſation, and the Dependence it has upon it.

This, I ſay, will plainly appear to any one that will try the utmoſt Extent of his Thought, whether the moſt lively Imagination can form an Idea of any thing, but upon the pre-exiſtent ones of Senſation: In the moſt fictitious Ideas, the *Entia Rationis*, which have no Exiſtence but in the Underſtanding, though the Mind can compound many Ideas together, and ſo frame a Being which really never was in Nature; yet there are no new Ideas here, tho' the Compoſition be ſo; for if they had not been all ſeparately repreſented before, it could not have joined them together in its Apprehenſion.

The

The Series is very natural and eaſy; we cannot know a thing without perceiving it, nor perceive it but by ſome Idea or Reſemblance of it; nor can the Mind have any Repreſentation of Objects without it, but through the Senſes: Not of human ones, but by Impreſſions made on them; nor of divine ones, but by ſome Similitude or Correſpondence with them, which Repreſentations are conveyed to it by Inſtruction through the Senſes: But in no ſenſe can the Intellect ſet up a Mint of its own, for the coining of new Ideas.

It has been preſumed, and with great Juſtice, that the Power of raiſing up to itſelf Ideas, without the Preſence or Impreſſion of any Object whatſoever, is perhaps a Privilege of the Divine Intellect alone; anſwerable to the almighty Power of Creation, or producing a Thing out of Nothing. But the Power of the Mind in our little World, is much the ſame with that of Man in the greater World. It is as impoſſible for it to raiſe up to itſelf any ſimple Idea entirely new and independent of all Senſation, as it is for a Man to add one Particle to the common Maſs of Matter: Though it muſt be confeſſed to have a wonderful Sagacity in working upon what it finds already ſtored up in the Imagination.

As the Imagination then is the Store-houſe, ſo are the Senſes the only Window, Door, or Inlet, whereby any Light or Furniture is admitted into it; and if theſe were from the firſt ſtopped up and cloſed, it would for ever remain a dark and empty Void: Yet when we come to examine what is contained in it, we ſhall find a moſt eſſential Difference between the Notices which are lodged there. If we ſurvey the whole Syſtem of Beings, we may divide them into two kinds, Material and Immaterial, for there is no middle Species. Of the firſt of theſe, which are the direct Objects of Senſation, we may behold

behold full and exact Repreſentations in the Mind, like a finiſhed Picture, boldly and ſtrongly drawn, and livelily repreſenting the Thing intended to be deſcribed. Becauſe we have a direct immediate Perception of them, the Figure in the Mind is adequate, and conſentaneous to the Object without, and the Mind has an Idea of it.

But of immaterial Things we have only a faint languid Conception, a few Out-lines in a Picture, but no full or proper Repreſentation of them. And the Reaſon is, becauſe they are too big for our Mind, it could not contain them; and therefore in Proportion to our Capacities, ſuch Information of their Eſſence, Nature and Properties is conveyed to us, as our Nature can bear, or as is ſufficient for our preſent State; not ſo as to yield us any clear Perception of them, but deſcribing them by Metaphor, Analogy and ſome Similitude to Objects better known to us. Whence it is not poſſible for us to raiſe an Idea, but only an inadequate Thought or Notion of them. And in the moſt refined exalted parts of Knowledge we are forced to make up theſe abſtracted Notions from ſenſible Things (having no other Materials to compoſe them of) and whoever will reſolve his moſt complex Thoughts of ſpiritual Things into ſimple Ideas, will find them to terminate in thoſe, and no other, which at firſt took their Riſe from ſenſible Objects. By which Rule we may eaſily know of what kind the Notices in the Intellect are; and then how we came by them, whether from Senſation or Inſtruction.

And the not ſufficiently attending to this Diſtinction has, I am perſuaded, been the chief Ground of all Confuſion and Error in our Reaſonings upon this Subject; and proved a fatal Miſtake to Mr. *Locke* in founding the ſublimeſt Parts of Knowledge upon Ideas of Reflexion, or the Operations of the Mind, which can neither give Ideas of themſelves,

ſelves, nor of any other Objects. For there can be no Ideas but of ſenſible things; nothing is properly an Idea, but what ſtands in the Mind for an adequate Image or Repreſentation of ſomething which is not in it; the Thing muſt be without us; and becauſe it cannot itſelf enter, the Likeneſs of it only is conveyed through the Senſes to the Imagination.

The Term Idea, therefore, can never be applied to the Operations of the Mind, as we cannot properly ſpeaking have any Idea of them; we cannot define what Thinking or Willing are, we know not their Power or Nature, nor can we form any diſtinct Idea of them, but only know that they are the Actings or Workings of the Intellect upon Ideas, firſt lodged in the Imagination for that Purpoſe, and neceſſarily to be conſidered as antecedent to any ſuch Operations; and without them the Mind could not have operated at all, nor have exerted one Act of Thinking, without being provided with ſome of theſe to think upon; nor even have had a Conſciouſneſs of it ſelf, or of its own Being. For though we are certain that the Mind does exert its Operations upon ſenſible Objects, yet we cannot frame to our ſelves the leaſt Idea or Reſemblance of them, abſtractedly from thoſe Objects on which they operate.

And this I obſerve, to ſhew there can be no weight in the Objection from the Logick of *Port-Royal* and others againſt this general Propoſition, that all other Ideas and Knowledge are derived from and by the Senſes. Their Argument runs thus: There is nothing that we conceive more diſtinctly than our Thought itſelf, nor any Propoſition more clear than this; *I think, therefore I am.* Now we could have no Certainty of this Propoſition, if we did not conceive diſtinctly what it is to be, and what it is to think. Therefore we have in us the

the Ideas of being and thinking, which neither entered into our Minds by, nor do in any manner derive their Origin from the Senſes.

But theſe Gentlemen are forced to add, "That "we muſt not be asked to explain theſe Terms, be- "cauſe they are of the Number of thoſe which are "ſo well underſtood by all the World, that endea- "vouring to explain them would render them ob- "ſcure." But this is a mere Fallacy, for if it repreſents Nothing, it is no Idea: If it has the Semblance of any Thing, it may be explained. We know that we do think, *i. e.* are conſcious of ſuch Operation in the Mind, but are ſo far from having any diſtinct Conception, any direct or original Idea of this or any other Operation in the Mind, that all the Ideas or Notions we can form of its Manner of Acting, and the Expreſſions we uſe for it, are borrowed from Senſation. It is no more than a natural Power in the Soul, and what no waking Man can prevent, any more than he can the Beating of the Heart, or Circulation of the Blood, which depend not on Ideas, but are neceſſary involuntary Motions; and the Idea of Thinking adds to a Man's Knowledge juſt as much as the Idea of Walking does to a Journey. But we have already ſeen, that without Ideas of Senſation we could not think at all; and therefore have no Conception of Exiſtence, either of Ourſelves, or any other Being.

Upon the whole, we cannot with the leaſt Propriety ſay we have an Idea of any Thing but what is ſenſible or material, becauſe nothing elſe can be wholly or adequately known. For want of ſuch a diſtinct and clear View of immaterial or ſpiritual Objects, we can have no Ideas of them; but our whole Knowledge is confined to Notions and Conceptions, it being impoſſible for us to apprehend, what their Nature, Powers, Properties, or Figure are.

are. Nor can we frame theſe very Notions, but by the Help and Repreſentations of ſenſible Things. As for Inſtance, when we would think of the Divine Nature, the perfecteſt Notion we perhaps can frame, is by Ideas of exceſſive Light and dazzling Splendour, though the moſt extenſive Imagination cannot conceive any thing beyond the Brightneſs of the Sun. And when we would define or deſcribe God, it is by negative Expreſſions, ſuch as Infinite, Immaterial, Immortal, *&c.* of which we have no poſitive Conception or Idea, but by Analogy to ſenſible Things, that he is not Finite, not Material, not Mortal, not Comprehenſible, *&c.*

And this may convince us, that they could not take their Riſe from the Mind, or any internal Operations or Reflexions, becauſe then the Mind would know them as they are. But it is not poſſible for it by any Abſtractions to frame Ideas of immaterial Beings, without applying thoſe of Senſation to them, which nevertheleſs have no Relation to or Dependence on them, but are as different as Spirit and Matter, *i. e.* as two Objects in the Syſtem of Things poſſibly can be. It implies a Contradiction to ſay our Reaſon can diſcover a Being, and yet have no Idea or Semblance of it, for that is to diſcover nothing: Or that we could naturally come at the Knowledge of ſomething whoſe Perfection, Eſſence, or Glory, our natural Faculties are not able to bear the moſt diſtant Glimpſe of.

If it be asked then, How we come by the Knowledge of God, if it is not by internal Reflexions of the Mind on the Ideas of Senſation? The Anſwer is eaſy, that it is by Inſtruction. What was not obvious to the Senſes, and therefore could not have entred into the Mind to conceive, That the Author of our Being has revealed and communicated to us, *viz.* a full Aſſurance of the Exiſtence of inviſible Objects, with ſo much of their Nature, Attributes and

and Properties as is ſufficient for our preſent State. So that being never manifeſted to our Senſe or Apprehenſion, *but in part, as in a Glaſs darkly*, the loftieſt Conceptions we can form of them, fall infinitely ſhort of their real Natures; nor can we raiſe any Conception of them beyond thoſe Metaphors and Similitudes by which they have been pictured out and reſembled to us. When the Eye of the Mind would by the pureſt Abſtraction view the Divine Glory, it is forced to ſubſtitute by way of Reſemblance, the ſtrongeſt Light that is known to the Eye of the Body.

This then is the Foundation whereon we are to build all our abſtracted Knowledge of inviſible immaterial Things. It is from Inſtruction alone that the Mind takes this flight, advances to remote and ſublime Truths, which Senſe cannot diſcern; ſoars as high as Heaven, and tours in thoſe lofty Speculations, wherein it takes a nearer View of all the Wonders of Eternity: Thoſe Objects of Faith which being not ſeen, are yet believed; though we have no direct Ideas or clear Perceptions, yet we have ſufficient Notices to confirm our Mind in their Exiſtence, our Knowledge in their Beauty and Goodneſs, our Affections to love and purſue, our Will and Paſſions to cleave inſeparably to them; till in another World the Veil ſhall be taken away, and we be admitted to that perfect Knowledge, which at preſent is neither needful nor poſſible.

Nor is this any Degradation of Man, that he was not placed at the head of Intellectual Beings, able perhaps to contemplate ſpiritual Truths with a kind of Intuition: Yet was he created perfect in his Order, and endued with all the Faculties ſuitable to his Condition; as a mortal Creature placed among Things which are ſeen and temporal: As intended for Immortality, inſtructed in things not ſeen and eternal, in order to fix his Hopes on that bleſſed Reward

Reward of being admitted into the City of God, to ſee clearly and enjoy fully the Glories of the heavenly Kingdom, which is reſerved for his final and eternal State. The Ideas of Senſe, or the Operations of Reaſon, were inſufficient to teach him the Author, or End of his Being, or the Objects of divine Wiſdom. A full View of them was not neceſſary; therefore God exhibited them in ſuch Degrees, as would beſt anſwer the Deſigns of his Providence, and all the Purpoſes and Ends of Man: So that in the moſt excellent Gifts and Graces he has nothing which he did not receive. *Now if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not received it?* But Knowledge is apt to puff a Man up, and make him conceit himſelf wiſe above that which is written.

Theſe things no way fall within the Cogniſance of Senſe or Reaſon; their moſt exalted Faculties give us not the leaſt Notion of Subjects above the Orb of Matter, nor could have the remoteſt View or Diſcernment of an uncreated Nature, there being no Proportion between the Faculty and the Object, between Finite and Infinite, no Similitude or Likeneſs whereunto we could compare it; and conſequently, no intellectual Chain, or certain Deductions and Concluſions, whereby we could have inferred it, or raiſed our Minds up to the Throne above. Therefore God let himſelf down in Condeſcenſion to our Infirmities, and manifeſted thoſe real Natures which were hid from us, thoſe inviſible Glories which we could not ſee and live, by ſuch gradual Revelations as the Wants of Men required, and he in his eternal Wiſdom and Juſtice ſaw fitting for us; otherwiſe they had remained for ever unknown and incomprehenſible to us; for Man could no more be ſelf-inſtructed in theſe Points, than he could be ſelf-created.

The Author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, ſays, "That an intelligent Being muſt have ſome

§ 3. Prop. 1. p. 41.

" immediate Objects of his Underſtanding, or at " leaſt a Capacity of having ſuch; for if there be " no Object of his Intellect, he is intelligent of no- " thing. He can neither think nor underſtand. " Therefore Man, according to the Growth of his " Reaſon, would have the Objects of Senſe for the " Objects of his Underſtanding; but by no abſtracted " Contemplation of their Ideas could he diſcover the " Eſſence, Nature, or Idea of Objects not evident
Prop. 3. " to Senſe;" becauſe, as he adds, " Thoſe Ideas " or Objects will be adequately and truly known to " the Mind, whoſe Ideas they are." But we can have no adequate Knowledge of ſupernatural Objects; therefore we can have no true Idea of them, becauſe we do not perceive them as they are.

Yet has he a Capacity of receiving ſuch, or forming Notions or Conceptions of them, according to the Degrees of Perſpicuity whereby they are notified to him; and as ſuch Notices are more or leſs diſtinct and clear, will his Images or Repreſentations of thoſe Originals be. But if they were naturally, or by any demonſtrable Inferences or Concluſions could be, the immediate Objects of the Intellect, their Ideas would be truly and adequately known. But we neither have, nor can have, ſuch Ideas of them; therefore the Originals, neither by Nature nor Illation, are the immediate Objects of human Underſtanding: And conſequently can be ſo only mediately, through the Senſes, by Language and Inſtruction, which muſt be by the Intervention of another Agent, who ultimately, in this Caſe, muſt be God. And this Rule will hold univerſally true in all the Parts of Divine Knowledge, whereof we can have no direct Conception or adequate Idea.

That we have no natural Capacities to form an Idea of God, is evident, becauſe we cannot define him, (for what we know, we may define) or put Bounds in our Minds to his Eſſence; but for a Finite

to

to contain an Infinite, is Contradiction and Abſurdity. And that we can by no rational Conſequences or Illations diſcover him, is equally certain, becauſe the intermediate Relations between a created Effect and a creative Cauſe, are no way apparent or diſcernible by us, as I ſhall hereafter more largely ſhew. But in this kind of Proof, the Arguments always looked upon as moſt clear and demonſtrative, are thoſe taken from the Works of God, the Frame, Conſtitution, Variety, and Order of the Univerſe. To which I ſhall only obſerve at preſent, that there is no one Chain of Cauſes and Effects that can lead the Mind from the Contemplation of the Creature to the Knowledge of the Creator. They are Terms infinitely diſtant, what no created Underſtanding could unite and bring together; it is an Act of Omnipotence; and he that could prove it, could alſo perform it.

Let us only hear what the laſt mentioned excellent Author ſays on this Subject: "That both the Beginnings and the Ends of Things, the leaſt and the greateſt, all conſpire to baffle us; and which way ever we proſecute our Enquiries, we ſtill fall in with freſh Subjects of Amazement, and freſh Reaſons to believe that there are indefinitely ſtill more and more behind, that will for ever eſcape our eagereſt Purſuits and deepeſt Penetration. This mighty Building is not only thus grand, and the Appearances ſtupendous in it, but the manner in which things are effected, is commonly unintelligible, and their Cauſes too profound for us. There are indeed many things in Nature which we know, and ſome of which we ſeem to know the Cauſes: But, alas! how few are theſe with reſpect to the whole Sum? And the Cauſes which we aſſign, what are they? commonly ſuch as can only be expreſſed in general Terms, whilſt the Bottoms of Things remain unfathomable. Such as have" Relig. Nat. Delineat. p. 81.

" been collected from Experience, but could ſcarcely " be known before-hand by any Arguments *à priori*, " to be capable of ſuch Effects; and yet till Cauſes " are known after that manner, they are not tho- " roughly underſtood. It is impoſſible for us to " come at the true Principles of Things. The " Cauſes that appear to us, are but Effects of other " Cauſes. And as for the Subſtances themſelves " of all theſe things, and their internal Conſtitution, " they are hid from our Eyes. Our Philoſophy " dwells in the Surface of Nature."

To argue then upon this Author's Principles: Thoſe Ideas or Objects which are immediate, will be adequately and truly known to the Mind whoſe Ideas they are; for Ideas can be no further the Ideas of any Mind, than the Mind has a Perception of them. But the leaſt and the greateſt of created things baffle us, their Reaſons eſcape our eagereſt Purſuits and deepeſt Penetration. The very Subſtances of things, and much more their internal Conſtitution are hid from our Eyes: Therefore we can have no Idea or Perception of them (except their outward Bulk, Figure, and ſome few Properties.) All the Images we frame of them, their Laws, Deſtination, Power, Contrivance and Wiſdom, are but at beſt falſe and imperfect Repreſentations, incapable of tranſmitting Ideas of Things as they are, and conſequently no more than Miſrepreſentations and Miſconceptions of Things.

And if theſe firſt Relations or Reſpects of Things, the neareſt to our View, be ſo unapparent, it will not be poſſible by the Intuition of any intermediate or more diſtant Relations, to diſcover other things with greater Certainty. There is no Certainty, and can be no Demonſtration; for if the firſt Propoſition be imperfect, or doubtful, or falſe, it will be always ſo, in all the Inſtances and Uſes to which it is applicable: And therefore impoſſible, from an imperfect

fect Idea of the Work, to form a perfect Idea of the Workman.

Neither can the Mind, by any Series of Dependency, aſcend by Effects to the firſt independent Cauſe. We indeed know by Revelation, what *Ariſtotle* and others could not by Reaſon, *That there is a firſt efficient Cauſe of all Things*; and are thence able to form Arguments, which may evince the Abſurdity of thoſe who maintain an Eternity of Matter, a Multiplicity of firſt Movers, or an infinite Series and Progreſſion of Cauſes; by reducing them to admit either a Progreſs to Infinity, which is abſurd; or grant ſome firſt pure Act or Being, which needs no other for its Actuation.

But we cannot aſcend *ſeriatim*, by this Chain of Cauſes and Effects, to the firſt Infinite: Becauſe out of the numberleſs Links there are ſo few that we can diſcern, or trace out their Dependence on that above it; becauſe the manner in which things are effected is commonly unintelligible, and their Cauſes too profound for us. We cannot know a Cauſe by any Arguments *à priori*, to be capable of rendering ſuch or ſuch Effects, and yet till Cauſes are known after that manner, they are not throughly underſtood. "But it is impoſſible for us to come at the "true Principles of Things, or to ſee into the Oe- Id. p. 81. "conomy of the fineſt Part of Nature. And thoſe "which appear Cauſes to us, are but Effects of other "Cauſes which we diſcern not: Theſe remain un- "fathomable, hid from our Eyes, and our deepeſt "Penetration reaches not beyond the Surface, *i. e.* "We are ignorant of all the Cauſes and Depen- "dencies in Nature, and therefore cannot from "them aſcend through the vaſt Space and Series "of Cauſes, to the firſt incomprehenſible Cauſa- "lity."

Nor am I any way apprehenſive of the terrifying Objection which ſome make; That if we can have

no Idea or Notion, Conception or Thought, not ſome way ſubject to, or conveyed by Senſe; then we cannot have the leaſt Evidence of any thing, but from the ſame: Therefore there being no corporeal Senſe of a Deity, there can be no Evidence at all of his Exiſtence. But this Argument is utterly inconcluſive; for no immaterial Beings can be Objects of corporeal Senſe; therefore without aſſiſtance we could not have known them: And for this very Reaſon did the Mind Infinite communicate them to our Minds through the Senſes, by the artificial Inſtitution and Vehicle of Language. Which is ſo far from inferring, as Atheiſts and others, from a wrong ſtating of the Queſtion, would, that therefore Knowledge is Senſe, or Senſe the Criterion of Truth; that it concludes directly contrary, that neither Senſe nor Reaſon are the Meaſure of Truth, but God alone is; and that Reaſon could not any way diſcover them, as they are not Objects of the very Intellect, till they are propoſed, and it becomes inſtructed in them.

And this Method of accounting for our coming at Divine Truths, is free from thoſe Embarraſments which ſo far perplex the Maintainers of a contrary Opinion, that we find the greateſt Authors conſtantly forced to take ſhelter under what they themſelves condemn, *the Abſurdity of innate Ideas.* Thus Dr. *Cudworth* expreſſes himſelf: "If the Soul be a "mere *Tabula raſa*, a naked and paſſive Thing, "which has no innate Furniture of its own, nor any "thing at all in it, but what was impreſſed upon it "from without, then there could be no ſuch thing "as Morality in the World. Very far otherwiſe: There is an innate potential Faculty and "Activity, but no innate Furniture. And as the "Being and Attributes of God are the firſt Original and Source of all things, the Ground and "Foundation of all Morality, yet not immediately "diſ-

Morality, &c. p. 288.

" diſcoverable by Reaſon: Therefore the Infinite
" Mind made ſuch derivative Participations of
" Knowledge, or Revelations of himſelf, to the
" Mind of Man, as might ſuffice for Direction in
" all its Moral Conduct, and to its final End."

So to ſay, " That theſe things muſt needs Id. L. 4.
" ſpring up from the active Power and Fecundity p. 149.
" of the Mind itſelf, becauſe the corporeal Objects 156.
" of Senſe can imprint no ſuch things upon it, is
" an evaſive begging of the Queſtion; and there
" is no more need for theſe things ſpringing up in
" the Mind, than there is for Water ſpringing up in
" a Veſſel, becauſe we find it there: It had a Ca-
" pacity to receive it, and it was conveyed by a
" proper Canal, or poured into it. Divine things
" are not the corporeal nor incorporeal Objects of
" Senſe, yet may be, and are conveyed into the
" Mind by the Inlet of the Senſes; neither are
" they Ideas of Senſation, becauſe Senſe could im-
" print no ſuch things, but they are νοήματα, in-
" tellectual intelligible Truths, when the Mind is
" taught and inſtructed in them, and then become
" Objects of its Apprehenſion, Contemplation and
" Thought. But they muſt be ſown before they will
" ſpring up in the Mind: And if the Mind had
" ſuch a natural Power and Fecundity to produce
" them, it would neceſſarily have an immediate
" Idea and direct Knowledge of them. Which is
" ſo far from being true, that the Shallowneſs and
" Frailty of its Capacities is not able to receive or
" bear the leaſt Glimpſe of their real Natures or Eſ-
" ſence, nor conceive them, but darkly, as they are
" repreſented to us by Analogy to Ideas of Senſa-
" tion, which are the only immediate Objects of
" the Senſes, and conſequently of the Intellect;
" therefore all others muſt be ſo mediately, by the
" Intercourſe of ſome other Power and Means."

And this Method of coming at ſupernatural Knowledge, is not only agreeable to Experience, or the way our own Minds will tell us they became acquainted with it; but it is congruous to God's Proceedings with Man; to the true Condition of Man in this State, and what alone can account for the Ignorance of the Philoſophers, in theſe Points moſt important to be known; and for that Blindneſs and Stupidity which have covered ſo many Millions of rational Creatures in all Nations and Ages of the World.

Firſt, It is entirely congruous with the Almighty's Proceedings. God made Man an intelligent Being, or endowed him with a Capacity to receive and know Truth; and therefore gave him alſo the Faculty of Speech, or Organs fit to frame articulate Sounds, and furniſh'd him with Language to enable him both to receive and give Inſtruction; that, Words being the Signs of internal Conceptions, or Marks for Ideas in the Mind, he might be capable firſt of being taught by God, and then to teach others, or to convey the Thoughts of his own Mind to another.

I think it would not be difficult to prove (and I ſhall in other Parts of this Work endeavour to do it) that the firſt Language was taught by God: Or, that Man could not of himſelf have diſcovered the Knowledge of fixing Sounds to ſignify Objects, Ideas, or Conceptions, ſo as to be Signs of, and ſtand for the Reality of Things, for the Subject of internal Operation in his own Mind, or make others ſo exactly underſtand his Thoughts, that the Correſpondence or leaſt Diſagreement of theſe inviſible Repreſentations of Things ſhould be immediately known. Or, if this were poſſible, that it muſt have been the Work of many Ages, during which time Man had been neither an intelligent nor ſociable Creature, and ſo ſent into the World to no purpoſe; for

for tho' he had the Faculty of receiving Knowledge, and Organs adapted to form articulate Sounds, yet without Language he could not have received it; he could not have Thought, and his ſeveral Noiſes had been Sounds without Signification. For he that could not think, could never ſubſtitute Sounds for things, or affix Senſe and Meaning to Words, any more than Parrots can, tho' they frame articulate Sounds, becauſe there is no natural Connexion between Sounds and Ideas. And conſequently Language, the Inſtrument of Rationality (ſince without it our rational Faculties had been uſeleſs) muſt be aſcribed, not to Man, but to God.

Words are neceſſary for two of the moſt important Purpoſes of Life, Thought and Converſation. Firſt, for the recording our own Thoughts, as they ſtand for nothing but the Ideas or Conceptions in the Mind of him that uſes them, they are Marks with certain and proper Significations, by which he is able to recollect and remember; and without them could neither call things to his View, nor exerciſe his Thought, nor ſpeak intelligibly. For where there is no Object, or Mark of it in the Mind, a Man is intelligent of nothing, has nothing to exerciſe any internal Operation in compounding, ſeparating, dividing, judging or reflecting; is only potentially Rational, the Uſe of Reaſon being lock'd up, and of no benefit to him. And if Children were not to hear others, they would never learn the Uſe of Speech; as Men without Language would rather be a Species of Apes, than rational Creatures. Vide Locke, l. 3. c. 9. p. 280. c. 2. p. 235.

So eſſential are Words to Reaſon, that we cannot think but by the help of Language. For Thought is nothing but the Speech of the Mind, which it uſes to it ſelf in all its Reflexions and Contemplations: τὸ διανοεῖσθαι λόγον, ὃν αὐτὴ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἡ ψυχὴ διεξέρχεται. So a great Author argues, Plato.

Relig. Nat. delin. p. 122. gues, that a mental Act can ſcarce be performed without Words, or ſomething equivalent (I believe, ſays he, that even the Deaf and Dumb form to themſelves ſome kind of Language: I mean, ſomething which ſupplies the room of Language.) For Thoughts in their naked State, diveſted of all Words, and taken merely by themſelves, are ſuch ſubtile fleeting things, as are ſcarce capable of making any Appearance in the Mind; at leaſt of being detained, compared together, and ranged into Sentences. If a Sentence be ſo made up of ſenſible Ideas, as to ſubſiſt in the Mind by the help of thoſe Images which remain in the Phantaſy, after the manner of a Sentence expreſſed in Pictures, or by Hieroglyphics: Yet ſuch a Sentence muſt be very imperfect, through the want of Grammatical Inflexions, Particles, and other Additions neceſſary to modify and correct the Ideas, of which (Particles, *&c.*) there can be no Images; and indeed little more than a Set of disjointed Conceptions, ſcarce exhibiting any Senſe without the aſſiſtance of Language to fill up the Blanks. It is by the help of Words, at leaſt in great meaſure, that we even reaſon and diſcourſe within our ſelves, as well as communicate our Thoughts and Diſcourſe with others: And if any one obſerves himſelf well, he will find that he thinks as well as he ſpeaks in ſome Language, and that in thinking he ſuppoſes and runs over ſilently and habitually thoſe Sounds, which in ſpeaking he actually makes. In ſhort, Words ſeem to be as it were Bodies or Vehicles to the Senſe or Meaning; and which without the other can hardly be fixed in the Mind. Let any Man try ingenuouſly whether he can think over but that ſhort Prayer in *Plato*, Τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ, *&c.* abſtracted quite from thoſe and all other words, *&c.*

Alcib. 2.

So that Thinking is no other than a mental Speaking; as no Propoſition can be underſtood or conſider'd

conſider'd by the Mind without Words. They are Signs by which it was at firſt acquainted with Things and all abſtracted Truths, and by which alone it is able to recal them for its Uſe. And on this account I doubt not but the *Greeks* expreſſed Reaſon and Words by the ſame Term λόγος. The ſingle Ideas of Senſation may be viewed by the Mind without thinking: Yet we cannot unite ſeveral together ſo far as to form a Propoſition upon them, without Words and Language.

The ſecond Uſe of Speech I need but mention, no one denying its Neceſſity for Communication, that one Man might convey his Thoughts to another, without which he could not have been a ſociable Creature; it is the Interpreter of the Mind, whereby we can unfold the clear Meaning of our moſt ſecret Thoughts and diſcourſe ſo as to be underſtood, which is the end of Speech.

God therefore created Man with intellectual Faculties; and to render them ſubſervient to the great Ends of his Being, he furniſhes him with Language; for God immediately converſed with him, as the Woman alſo as ſoon as formed did with Man. And as Language conſiſts of Words or Names of Things, God ordered him to give Names of every Creature, which we may juſtly ſuppoſe to be of Divine Appointment, ſince their Names were according to their Natures, it not being conceivable that any human Mind (for the Reaſons before given) ſhould at the firſt View do this, without a ſupernatural Aſſiſtance and Communication.

Whence it ſeems to appear that Language, or the Signification of Words, and Connexion of them with the firſt Ideas of Senſation, without which Man could not have received any part of Knowledge, neither thought himſelf of ſenſible Objects, or the Pictures of them in his Mind, nor communicated

nicated them to others, was entirely owing to divine Inſtruction.

So large a Stock of Materials might have perhaps been ſufficient for all the Purpoſes of Man, as an Inhabitant of this World only; but God intended him for another inviſible and inconceivable State; therefore revealed to him ſo much of the things belonging thereto, as was neceſſary to prepare and direct him thither. Man had a Capacity to receive ſpiritual and intellectual Truths, and God made ſuch Diſcoveries of them as plentifully to furniſh the Mind with all the Means of Divine Knowledge. But theſe Truths were the Secrets of the moſt high God, what Man by his Wit, Senſes, or Endeavours could not have apprehended: There would be but little Difference between the created and uncreated Nature, if the Imagination of one could find out the Infinite Perfections, Purpoſes, and Counſels of the other. It is equalling a Finite to an Infinite, and Man could with as little Abſurdity and as much Eaſe create himſelf, as diſcover the Natures, give Definitions, Names, and Ideas of immaterial, incomprehenſible Objects; Beings of whoſe real Eſſence, Attributes, or Operations he could not raiſe any Images in his Mind, and therefore could not poſſibly ſo much as think of.

All the ſeveral Ranks of Beings and Relations, which the Senſes cannot diſcover, Actions we never heard, and Notions we cannot ſee, are out of the reach of their Teſtimony, and muſt be let into the Mind or come to be known ſome other way; which could be only from a proper Inſtructor, and in the Caſe before us, there was none but God.

The whole Voice of Antiquity agrees in this, that the Knowledge of the τὸ ὄν is Θεῶν ἐις ἀνθρώπους δόσις, a Gift of the Gods to Men. And *Plato* ſays,

Plato Phileb. Theæt.

ſays, ἐπιστήμη, Science, is nothing but αἴσθησις, Senſation, or that inward Judgment, which the Mind paſſes upon things conveyed to it through the Senſes. Even *Celſus* concluded, "That a divine Spirit de- Orig. cont. Celſ. l. 7. p. 366.
"ſcended to acquaint the ancient Sages with thoſe
"divine Truths they taught the World." And *Iamblichus* aſſerts, "That our weak and frail Na- §. 3. c. 18.
"ture poſſeſſes nothing of this Knowledge as na-
"tural to it, σύμφυτον δὲ οὐδὲν κέκτηται."

It will never be ſaid, that Man at his firſt Creation had a natural View of the immaterial World, or an immediate Idea of God, becauſe ſuch Objects or Ideas are adequately known to the Mind whoſe Ideas they are; but this God is not ſubject to, therefore no immediate Object of the Mind, and can be ſo only mediately by the help of Language and Information. Of material Things we form exact Pictures, Impreſſions or Ideas; of divine Things only Thoughts, Notions, or Conceptions, and thoſe by Analogy to Ideas of Senſation, which are no juſt Repreſentations of their real Nature, but Reflexions ἐν αἰνίγματι, dark and obſcure Reſem- 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
blances, therefore cannot be a Creature of the Intellect, or any Original Production of the Mind, for then it would have been conſentaneous to Nature, a real Likeneſs and Similitude of it. Again, the Objects of Senſe to one Man, are ſo to every Man that has his Senſes, and the Impreſſion is the ſame where the Organs are not vitiated; ſo that all agree in the Proportions and Deſcriptions of them. It would be the ſame in ſpiritual Objects, if the natural Fecundity of the Mind produced them; there would be no Difference or Confuſion in the Apprehenſions of Men concerning God and ſpiritual Things; but the Faculty which is alike in all, would naturally afford the like Conceptions to all. Yet the Thoughts of Men vary infinitely, ſome have true, ſome have falſe, ſome have weak, and others

others no Conceptions at all of theſe Subjects. Whence comes this, but from the different manner of Inſtruction? Where the Mind is juſtly inform'd, its Thoughts and Reaſonings will (or ought to) be juſt and true; but when all the ſolid Notices wherein Mankind had been inſtructed became weak or obliterated, ſuch were their Apprehenſions: The Names of Things continued, and Men reaſoned on them; but they reaſoned falſly, their Inſtruction poiſon'd others, and ſpread the moſt deteſtable Opinions of the divine Nature through the World; which could not have happened if the Mind had a natural Power to raiſe any direct immediate Conceptions, or attain a clear Diſcernment of it. Whereas Men differed in nothing more than their Opinions and Sentiments of God, in which every thing was ſo confuſed and perplexed, dubious and uncertain, that it was the Subject of Diſpute, not of Knowledge, and filled the World with Debate, Contention, and Strife: There is no accounting for this, but by ſaying, that Natural Wiſdom is not the Property of Man, but of God; it grows not in the Faculty or Imagination; that whatever Science a Man has he receives it from without, it is conveyed to the Mind through the Ducts and Channel of the Senſes.

To put this Argument in a yet ſtronger Light: As without Language Man could not have thought, or diſcourſed, or given Names to ſenſible things, it is beyond all Stretch of Power or Imagination, that even with Language he ſhould be able to give Names to inviſible incomprehenſible Beings, *i. e.* to expreſs what is inexpreſſible, what he could not think of, whoſe Eſſence was utterly unknown to him, and therefore he could never invent Words to ſtand for Ideas, Conceptions, or real Natures that he knew nothing of; and an Idea of nothing is a Contradiction. And what increaſes the Difficulty here

here is, that theſe Names are expreſſive of their Natures, and yet taken from ſenſible things; now if Man had any clear adequate Knowledge of them, he would have impoſed Names proper and peculiar to them, ſo as to be diſtinguiſhed from all others, and not borrowed them from inferior Natures; which is a full Evidence that they were not of human Invention; for as we conceive, ſo ſhould we ſpeak; but given by one who had a full comprehenſive View of them, yet repreſented thoſe glorious Objects ſo far tranſcending our Capacities, in a manner ſuitable to our Apprehenſion of them, which is not directly or immediately, but by Semblance to human Things, in order to help the Underſtanding towards conceiving what would otherwiſe be for ever hidden from us. And for this reaſon we can neither think, conceive, nor expreſs ourſelves concerning them, but in the manner wherein they have been repreſented to us.

Thus the divine Nature, tho' in itſelf, by reaſon of its abſolute Simplicity and Infinitude, it can neither be defined nor apprehended by us under any one adequate Conception or Notion; yet God has revealed himſelf by various Names which lead us to the Contemplation of his Nature and Attributes, and yet ſuited to our Capacities, or manner of apprehending divine Objects. Thus *Jehovah* is the Name of Eſſence or Subſtance; *El*, of Force, Fortitude and Power; *Shaddai*, is All-ſufficiency; *Adonai*, the Lord of the Univerſe; *Elohim*, the moſt High; *Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hoſts, *&c.* hereby denoting Eternity, Omnipotence, Independence, Self-Exiſtence, the Creator of the World, the Giver and Preſerver of Being to all his Creatures, *&c.* which no created Underſtanding could have known or explicated, without a Communication from him who is the Author of Eſſence, Exiſtence, and all Perfection.

So

So a Spirit, in the primary Signification, is *Breath*, thereby alluding to its inviſibile ſubtile Nature. Angel is a *Meſſenger*, denoting the Office of thoſe illuſtrious Miniſters who attend round the Throne. Theſe and other Names of ſpiritual Objects, could not have been given but by one well acquainted with the Secrets of Heaven, which neither *Adam* nor any of his Poſterity poſſibly could be, without a Revelation from Heaven.

Vid. Iamblich. de Myſt. § 7. c. 5.

The Heathens, it is certain, did not hold divine Names to be of human Inſtitution, but from the Gods, and what therefore could not be alter'd, as not retaining the ſame peculiar Force when tranſlated into any other Language, and (which is worth obſerving) that the Barbarous (*i. e.* the Jewiſh or Oriental) Names were more emphatical and brief, and had the leaſt Ambiguity and Variety of Diction. So *Plato*, tho' he derives them originally from the Gods, yet confeſſes the *Greeks* had them from the Barbarians.

And theſe Revelations to Man had a double Uſe. 1. To enable him to fulfil the Ends of his Being; and, 2. To communicate and tranſmit them to others, that there might be no neceſſity of maintaining a perpetual Intercourſe between Heaven and Earth; to exerciſe the Duty of Faith, both as a rational and a moral Agent. Nor is there any danger of miſtake, for theſe Subjects of divine Communication are as eaſily ſeparated, diſtinguiſhed and known from all other Notices of the Mind, as the different Ideas, convey'd by the ſeveral Senſes, are.

If a Man takes a Survey of his own Mind, and enquires how he came by Ideas, or thoſe perfect Repreſentations of material Beings he ſees pictured there, as of a Houſe, a Man, *&c.* he will eaſily perceive, that it was by the Organ of Sight; if of Sounds, by Hearing; and ſo on. His Senſes, Underſtanding

derſtanding, and Experience, are infallible Witneſſes of it.

But if we come to ask ſuch an one, whether he has a clear Perception of Objects above the fixed Stars? he will anſwer in the Negative. If we demand a Reaſon why? It is becauſe he never had a near diſtinct View of them. By what Notes or Characters does he repreſent them in his Mind? By the moſt glorious Semblances of material Things. Did he diſcover theſe inviſible immaterial Beings by any internal Operations or Reflexions of his own? No Man that ever lived could anſwer in the Affirmative. By what means then did he come to have a Notion of what he never ſaw nor heard, of the Manſions in Heaven, the bleſſed Angels, the infinite Creator of all Things, *&c.*? The Reply, without heſitation, will be, that he was taught them, inſtructed in their Nature and Perfections from Analogy or Repreſentation to ſenſible Things. Whether he could poſſibly frame any other Conception of them, or, by any Stretch of the Mind, raiſe new Ideas of immaterial Objects, wherein he had never been inſtructed? It is impoſſible he ſhould. From whom did he learn them? From his Parents or Maſters. From whom did they receive their Knowledge? From their Anceſtors. Which will lead us on till we come at the firſt Parents of Mankind, who were inſtructed by God himſelf. Hence comes that univerſal Acceptation of the Word *Learning*: All ſpiritual Knowledge is ſuch, we learn'd it from our Fathers, and they from God.

In the whole of this Procedure, there is nothing but what is plain and natural, agreeable to the Experience and Teſtimony of every Man's Conſcience and Underſtanding, that will but conſult them, and ſatisfy himſelf how he came by the Poſſeſſion of any Truth.

We indeed are told by others of Ideas of Senſation, Ideas of Reflexion, Ideas of Self-conſciouſneſs, Ideas of Thinking, Willing, and all the internal Operations of the Mind, ſimple Ideas and complex Ideas, Ideas of ſimple Modes, and Ideas of mixed Modes, Ideas of primary and ſecondary Qualities, Ideas of Power, collective Ideas of Subſtances, Ideas of Cauſes and Effects, Ideas of Relations, and numberleſs others. By a due Combination, Abſtraction, and Reflexion of which, we may by Illation infer the Neceſſity, Exiſtence, Nature and Properties of immaterial Beings, and thoſe Relations we ſtand in to them.

But miſerable would be the Caſe of Man, were he doom'd to learn his Duty, his Happineſs, and his God, from ſuch unnatural inſignificant Jumbles of Words: For who then could be ſaved? How few ever underſtand them? How much fewer would be able to go through the Labyrinth of theſe ſeveral Operations? And when they had, it would help them but little in the Search of Truth, that real and ſubſtantial Knowledge, which renders them better, as well as wiſer, to obey God here, and enjoy him hereafter.

Beſides, in all our Knowledge and Experience, there is not the leaſt Ground for this Omnipotence in the Mind. It cannot think or operate without ſome precedent Ideas to work upon. With the Combination of all its Powers, it cannot produce one new Idea without the Help of the Senſes; or Notions of Inviſibilities, but by borrowing them from Senſation. Let a Perſon of the greateſt natural Sagacity, acquir'd Improvements, and exerciſed in metaphyſical abſtracted Reaſonings, try it, and he will not find one Idea in his Imagination, not a ſingle Picture in his Intellect, that exhibits Things quite removed from all Degrees of Senſe: Nor can he affix any preciſe determin'd Idea, that he ſhall ſteadily

ſteadily annex to them, as often as he ſhall happen to revolve them in his Mind.

But what alone may convince every impartial Enquirer, that theſe Truths could come from no other Source than that of Revelation; is the Impoſſibility of altering, enlarging, or diminiſhing them. We know them ſo far as God has taught us, and no further; we can neither diſcover new Objects, nor conceive thoſe that have been revealed to us, otherwiſe than as they were communicated, nor can know them better by any Similitudes, Relations, or Oppoſitions we can frame: Nor have all the Self-reflexions or Abſtractions of the moſt exalted Minds, from any Combinations or Alterations of Ideas, been able, amidſt their other prodigious Diſcoveries, to add a ſingle *Iota* to one of theſe. Which could not have been, if theſe Subjects had been the Product of Reaſon, Thinking, or human Enquiry. All other Arts and Sciences have been gradual, and moſt of them yet ſhort of Perfection. But where God is the Teacher, Reaſon is at a Nonplus; it can go no further, nor add to his Determinations; they are all of that kind of firſt Principles, which give all Evidence to, but receive no Evidence from our Concluſions.

Secondly, This Method of accounting for our attaining Knowledge by Inſtruction, is moſt agreeable to Experience, and the Condition of Mankind thro' all Ages; as in a good meaſure appears from what has been already ſaid: And it will, upon Examination, be found, that all our real and ſolid Knowledge is entirely owing to it; not from any private internal Growth, but the Pains and Culture of others. For without any Indignity to the imperial Faculty of Reaſon, (which is common to all, and the Capacity of Learning much the ſame) the apparent Difference among Men, proceeds from Inſtruction or Attention. *Ratio eſt communis, doctrina differens, diſcendi quidem* Cic. Leg. 1. N. 10.

quidem facultate par. And this explains the old Diſtinction, that *Virtue is our own, but Wiſdom is not*, becauſe we are obliged to the Inſtruction of others for it. *Virtus eſt intus in nobis, ſcientia ad nos extrinſecus venit. Scientia igitur alieni beneficii eſt, quia poſita eſt in audiendo.*

Lactant. L. 6. p. 514.

No one denies that Men are, what *Plato* juſtly calls them, φύσει λογιστικοι, *by Nature capable of Reaſon*, and Reaſon of vaſt Attainments in Knowledge: But neither one nor the other could be without Language, nor Language without Inſtruction, nor Inſtruction (in the Language of divine things at leaſt) but from God. This is the Order of Nature, the Appointment of its Author, which there is no deviating from. As it alone ſolves thoſe otherwiſe unaccountable Difficulties, in the Savageneſs of Nations, the Ignorance of Ages, the horrid Errors of Philoſophy, the gradual Advancement, Perfection, or Decay of Religion, Arts, and Sciences: The only Difference was according to the Opportunity of receiving Inſtruction. *Greece* was a thouſand Years without the leaſt Tincture of Philoſophy, or Knowledge of Nature; and when it appeared among them, it was not of their own Manufacture, but the Spoils of *Egypt* and the Eaſt. Their Fathers were as well fitted for Improvement as their Deſcendants, but had no Inſtructors, nor knew where to look for them: And *Socrates*, in his *Apology*, tells the *Athenians*, "That they will fall into an irrecoverable State, "unleſs God ſhall take care of them, and ſend them "another Inſtructor." So the *Romans*, and every diſtant Nation, were barbarous for want of Intercourſe; and on the ſame account the *New Guinea* Men are Savages to this Day.

Repub. 7. p. 256.

For the Mind of every one being at firſt a perfect Blank, if nothing were wrote upon it but the Obſervations of naked unaſſiſted Reaſon, it would be little better than a Sheet of blotted Paper, filled per-

perhaps with Characters, but thoſe deformed and uſeleſs, without one Note or Thought relating to God, Eternity, or a future State. And notwithſtanding the Cenſures ſome Moderns have paſs'd upon *Lactantius* and others, for aſſerting that nothing could be known of God but by Revelation: As if they hereby attempted to diſcredit human Reaſon, and we therefore ought to beware of them and their Doctrine; becauſe whoever depreciate Reaſon, we may be aſſured they have ſome very unwarrantable Paradoxes to advance, *&c.* It may on the other hand be affirmed with equal Juſtice, that no one exalts Reaſon above its proper Limits, as the Light of Heaven, and the Oracle of God; but with an intent to depreciate Revelation, and make Man the Meaſure of Truth. But Truth will ſuſtain itſelf; and no Article in it has a ſurer Foundation than this, that nothing can be known of God but immediately from God; nothing has a more concurrent Teſtimony of all Antiquity and learned Men in the World: To which alſo may be added, that Man is not born wiſe, but becomes ſo by Teaching and Inſtruction.

It muſt be confeſſed, that in the firſt Ages of Philoſophy, when every thing was under Litigation, much ado was made about *Virtue* in Man, whether it were by Acquiſition or natural Infuſion; ſome held the latter, ſome the former; *Plato* is variable. But tho' he and *Socrates* at ſome times made Virtue produced by θεία μοῖρα, *a Divine Fate*, without a Concurrence of the Mind; yet *Timæus Locrus*, from whom *Plato* borrowed ſo many Notions, though he taught the Principles of Virtue to be from Nature, yet affirm'd the Middle and End (or the Completion) of them, to be from Diligence, by the means of Inſtitution and Philoſophy, διὰ παιδείας καὶ φιλοσοφίας, which ſtrengthen Virtue, as Exerciſe does the Body. And *Socrates* who ſtudied Virtue, we know, found Inſtruction ſo neceſſary, that he

Meno, P. 89.

P. 103.

was not aſhamed to be taught by Women; he call'd *Diotima* his Miſtreſs, and for a long time frequented *Aſpaſia*. *Ariſtotle* divided Virtue into *Rational* and *Moral*: The firſt he makes chiefly to proceed from, and be perfected by Inſtruction; the other, which are *Ethics*, to depend entirely on Cuſtom or Manners, from which they take their Name, and differ very little. Several of the Stoicks held the Seeds of Virtue to be in *Nature*; as *Cleanthes*, that a good Man was ſuch φύσει καὶ μὴ θέσει, *by Nature, not by Inſtitution*; yet others of them taught ἀρετὴν διδακτὴν, that *Virtue was teachable*; and even *Zeno*, in an Epiſtle to *Antigonus*, that an ingenuous Mind, with the Aſſiſtance of a Maſter and competent Exerciſe, might eaſily attain to perfect Virtue. But the prevailing Opinion of the Ancients was, that four Things (φύσις, λόγος, παιδεία, καὶ ἄσκησις) *Nature*, *Reaſon*, *Inſtruction*, and *Application*, were as neceſſary to the attaining Virtue, and every Art, as a rich Soil, proper Culture, a painful Husbandman, and good Seed, are to a fruitful Harveſt (and *Plutarch* wrote a little Work to prove Virtue to be from *Induſtry*) That good Education and Inſtruction make good Natures; and good Natures, from ſuch Diſcipline, are made better than they were before; for Men become good and wiſe, not from Nature, but Inſtruction and Care: That they who are leaſt diſpoſed to them by Nature, will by theſe means be brought to practiſe every Branch of them; as they who by Nature are the fitteſt, will become bad thro' Sloth and Negligence; and they look'd upon the forming the Minds of Youths to be as much owing to the Maſter, as the Faſhion of the Clay is to the Hands of the Potter: Therefore when *Diogenes* ſaw a Lad behave indecently, he gave the Maſter a Blow, and ask'd *why he inſtructed his Scholar no better*. In ſhort, a good Education was eſteem'd πηγὴ καὶ ῥίζα καλοκαγαθίας, *the Fountain and Root of all well-doing*.

Ethic. l. 2. c. 1.

Plutarch. de Lib. Educand. P. 4.

And

And for the ſame Reaſons the Chriſtians called it φωτισμὸς, becauſe it illuminates; the Maſter takes off the Cover, opens the Store of Learning and Wiſdom, and thereby manifeſts what before was hid. Cl. Alex. Strom. 5. p. 578.

But when they ſpeak of Divine Learning, it is in another Strain, and the Gods are allowed to be the only Maſters. *Plato* treating of the Divine Nature, ſays, "This Doctrine, tho' ſtrange, the Gods (as "they ſay) have thus deliver'd to us to learn, "and teach it to others." And over and over again, "That we could not learn theſe Truths but "from the Gods, or the Sons of the Gods; and "that we cannot know their Will without a Pro-"phet to reveal it to us." *Iamblichus* ſaw the Force of this Truth, and was poſitive "That human "Nature can neither ſpeak of God, nor do any di-"vine Works without God." *Cicero* would go further than his Maſter *Plato*, in ſaying, "That Phi-"loſophy (under which he includes the whole of "Religion) was not only the Gift, but the Inven-"tion of the Gods. *Philoſophia omnium mater artium, ut Plato ait donum, ut ego inventum Deorum.* And Chriſtians, till latter Ages, affirmed Θεόδοτον σοφίαν, that divine Wiſdom, or the Knowledge of divine Things was from God; and that Learning and Knowledge are to be received from what we hear, and not from what we ſee. Phileb. p. 17. Tuſc. Q. L. 1. N. 26. Theodoret. Serm. 1. p. 7. Lactant.

For theſe Reaſons, the World has always laid ſo great a ſtreſs upon Education, as if without it Man would ſcarce become a rational Creature; or whatever Faculties he has, they would have remained uſeleſs to all the Purpoſes of Knowledge, Society, and Life. This is a Subject I may hereafter more largely treat of; and therefore at preſent ſhall only ſpeak the Sentiments of *Plutarch*, as they will both ſhew the Neceſſity of it for the reclaiming of Nature, and what was the Opinion of the wiſeſt Ancients upon this Head.

De Amore Prolis. He obſerves, That no Creature comes into the World under ſo many Diſadvantages as Man; That his Education is laborious, his Increaſe ſlow, and Virtue ſeated at ſo great a diſtance, that few Parents live till their Sons can reach it. Hence *Neocles* did not ſee *Themiſtocles* a Conqueror at *Salamis*; nor *Miltiades* the Triumphs of *Cimon*; *Xantippus* never heard an Oration of *Pericles*, nor *Ariſto* the Philoſophy of *Plato*.

Adverſ. Colot. vol. 3. 408. That Life indeed we have from Parents, but to live well, from Learning and Education, which are as neceſſary to the Mind as the Nurſes Milk is to the Body; and he that wants it, will prove like a Whelp brought up in an old Woman's Lap, uſeleſs, and good for nothing: For if Nature produce any good Affections, yet, like Trees unprun'd, they run into falſe Shoots, and unprofitable Wood. Men take pains to learn all other Arts, Reading, Riding, Muſick, Dancing, nay even what is neceſſary for Meat and Drink, and Raiment; not one of which, without Learning, could they in any Inſtance do tolerably. And can any thing be more ridiculous than to ſee the common Acts of Life want Direction, and yet conclude that Prudence and Wiſdom, and the Art of living well, for the ſake of which all other things are provided, and the right Uſe of our intellectual Faculties, to which every Branch of Knowledge is ſubſervient, can be attain'd without Art and Care, and be owing entirely to Chance? Whoever denies that Virtue is owing to Inſtruction, denies there is any ſuch thing as Virtue; for it proceeds from being taught, and he that hinders the teaching of it, does what he can to root it out of the World.

Virtutem doceri poſſe. vol. 2. 205.

De Auditione, vol. 1. 155. De Lib. educand. p. 2. Of all the Senſes therefore, *Hearing* is of the greateſt ſervice to Virtue and Reaſon: For Nature, without Teaching and Inſtruction, is blind, ἡ μὲν γὰρ φύσις ἄνευ μαθήσεως τυφλὸν; and he lays ſuch ſtreſs thereon,

thereon, that whereas Nature, Reaſon, and Application, are neceſſary Concurrents to Wiſdom, yet he will have Reaſon to be nothing but Inſtruction, καλῶ δὲ λόγον μὲν, τὴν μάθησιν. For the Mind of Children is like ſoft Wax, capable of Impreſſion, but afterwards grows hard, and will not receive it. They ſtand in need therefore of Inſtruction and Care, as much as Beaſts; which *Lycurgus* intended to ſhew, by bringing up a Couple of Whelps, one to Sports in the Field, the other fondled at home: That proved ſagacious and uſeful in its kind, this good for nothing but to lick a Trencher. He afterwards produced them in a full Aſſembly of *Spartans*, to enforce the Neceſſity of Education; for the Difference did not proceed from Nature, both having the ſame Sire and Dam, but from Education; and that this formed us to Virtue more than Nature. The Application was, That Learning, Inſtitution, and accuſtoming themſelves to do as *Hercules* did, would tend more to their Glory, than the boaſting of being deſcended from him. Lacon. Apothg. Lycurgus,

It is Intercourſe and Commerce that improve the Mind; and without them Man would have been the moſt ſavage and ſhameleſs Creature in the World, πάντων ἀγριώτατον ζώων, καὶ ἀναιδέστατος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦν. And that to this alone did even *Greece* owe her Literature and Politeneſs, the Uſe of Wine, and Corn, and Letters. Aquæ & Ignis Comparatio, p. 957.

And the whole may be ſummed up in this: That Man by Nature has Reaſon; but Reaſon perfected and endowed with Virtue, is owing to Diſcipline and Induſtry. De Solert. Animal. p. 962.

This is ſufficient to ſhew how degraded the Condition of Man, and his potential Reaſon, would be without Inſtruction; a wild Savage, under no Reſtraint or Law, without Senſe to provide the common Neceſſaries or Comforts of Life, without the Knowledge of Manners, Letters, or Religion. So many

many always have been, and ſtill are, with a Language ſcarce articulate, without Shelter or Raiment, without Food but what Nature equally provides for them and Beaſts, without any Apprehenſions of God or another World; and, in all reſpects, approaching nearer to the Brutal than the Rational Intellectual State. And if we believe *Pliny*, Man without Inſtruction would neither ſpeak, nor walk, nor eat. And even at this day, without Inſtruction, the very Apprehenſion of Religion would be ſoon loſt in the World.

Procem. l. 7. Hominem ſcire nihil ſine doctrina, non fari, non ingredi, non veſci.

Thirdly, This Account of coming at Knowledge agrees with all the Annals of Antiquity and Hiſtories in the World.

Moſes has recorded the Settlements of the Firſt Parents of Mankind, where God in a more frequent and immediate manner gave Revelations of his Will, and commanded them to teach it to their Children, and their Childrens Children. Hence, thoſe firſt Colonies of the Eaſt, *Phœnicia*, *Perſia*, and *Egypt*, continued the Oracles of Learning to the World through all ſucceeding Ages. The further Men diſperſed from them, the more they became ſunk in Barbarity, and diveſted of Humanity. Reaſon was like the Echo, where neareſt to the Voice it was ſtrong, but as it removed, gradually ſunk and died away. And what not a little contributed to this Preſervation of Knowledge in the Eaſt, was God's continuing to reveal himſelf to the *Jews*; ſo that in proceſs of time the little Spot of *Jewry* was the only Place where the true God was known and taught. And ſome Beams of this Divine Wiſdom could not but ſhine forth from time to time upon the neighbouring People who converſed with them.

Accordingly, whenever we find a People begin to revive in Literature, it was owing to one of theſe Cauſes; either to ſome Tranſmigrators from thoſe Parts coming and ſettling among them, or elſe to their

their going thither for Inſtruction. From theſe Fountains they always had it, and at this Fire the Nations of the World lighted their own. There is no Inſtance to be given to the contrary. Hither *Athens*, and afterwards *Rome*, came in queſt of Knowledge and Inſtruction. Theſe were the Schools and Maſters to the World. And though our Accounts of *Aſia* are but ſhort and defective, yet what Remains there are, as alſo their Traditions even in *China*, trace their Original and Oracles weſtward; which is the fulleſt Confirmation of the *Moſaick* Hiſtory, and of the Propagation of Knowledge by Inſtruction only.

Adam no doubt had infuſed Science, with a large imperious Underſtanding. He ſaw all his eldeſt Deſcendants before the Flood, except *Noah*; and unqueſtionably did inſtruct them both by Example and Precept, in the Knowledge and Worſhip of the true God, and what tremendous Crimes Apoſtacy and Diſobedience were. This *Noah* (who had converſed with many of the Antediluvian Patriarchs) and *Shem*, that Preacher of Righteouſneſs, did, after the Flood, inſtructing their Deſcendants in that true Theology, and moſt excellent Philoſophy, they had received from their Fathers. From whence the Eaſtern Schools, eſpecially the *Jewiſh* and *Babylonian*, became the moſt famous in the World, the Inventors of all uſeful Arts and Sciences, and the Fountains from which all other Nations received their Religion and Learning; as the very Oracles of *Apollo* confeſs. *Abraham* being thoroughly inſtructed in Geometry, Aſtronomy, and all the Literature of the Eaſt, is ſuppoſed by many to be the firſt who tranſplanted them into *Egypt*, and to have founded the School at *Memphis*, where they ſo aſſiduouſly applied themſelves to the Culture and Increaſe of Knowledge, that they were looked upon by other Parts of the World to be the Inventors

Vid. Euſeb. Præp. L. 9. c. 3.

ventors of all the Arts they found practiſed there; and *Joſeph* might inſtruct them in other Parts of Wiſdom, ſo that many look upon him as the *Apis*, or great God of *Egypt*. Among the *Jews* the Houſes of the Patriarchs were the Schools of Religion and Learning; afterwards in the Cities of the *Levites* the Youths were inſtructed in Knowledge and the Law of God. *Samuel* preſided over the *Naioth*, or College of *Ramah:* And in the Schools of *Jericho* and *Ramoth-Gilead*, the Diſciples were called the Sons of the Prophets. And from theſe Seminaries of Learning did *Thales*, *Plato*, and others in After-ages take all the Seeds of Knowledge, which they cultivated at home with ſuch Succeſs and Applauſe.

Vid. Euſeb. Præp. L. 9. c. 17. Id. c. 26.

With this Account the ancient Authors agree. *Eupolemus* ſpeaking of the *Babyloniſh* Traditions, ſays, the *Egyptian* Prieſts of *Heliopolis* learned Aſtrology from *Abraham*. And that *Moſes* firſt taught the Uſe of Letters to the *Jews*, from whom the *Phœnicians* received them, as the *Greeks* did from the *Phœnicians*. *Artapanus* relates much the ſame Thing, that *Abraham* firſt taught Aſtronomy to the *Phœnicians* and *Egyptians*, and ſo do *Melo* and *Philo*.

Id. c. 18, 19, 20.

The Truth is, that wherever there is Science, there muſt have been Diſcipline; and where there is Diſcipline, there muſt have been a Maſter; and this Maſter we may find if we inquire for him, wherever the Regiſters of Time have been preſerved. As for inſtance, *Theophraſtus* learned of *Ariſtotle*, *Ariſtotle* of *Plato*, *Plato* of *Socrates*, *Socrates* of *Anaxagoras* and *Archelaus*, and ſo on. If we go to *Thales* and the firſt wiſe Men, we muſt again ſtop and inquire who were their Maſters; if it be ſaid, the *Egyptians*, or *Indians*, *Babylonians* and *Magi*; they again we ſee had their Teachers, till at length we come to the Origin of Mankind; and if we then

Vid. Cl. Alexandr. Strom. 6. p. 643.

then ask who was the Teacher and Inſtructor, it certainly could not be any Mortal. If it be ſaid, the Angels were, this cannot be; for whatever Communications they might make as Angels, or ſpiritual Beings, without the Organs of Voice, Man could neither hear nor underſtand them; or if they aſſumed a human Voice and Language, this muſt have been by ſpecial Permiſſion and Appointment. But even Angels were but Learners of Truth, for they had a beginning. We muſt therefore aſcend above all Principalities and Powers among them, till we come to one eternal uncreated Being, by whom all things were made, the only God, who is the Fountain of Truth; and who at ſundry times and in divers manners, made Communications of his Will to his rational Creatures, and to whom all Knowledge and Wiſdom is ultimately to be referred. And if Truth did not remain in its original Purity, it was not owing to the Inſtruction or the Teacher, but to the ungrateful Soil into which it fell; to the Sloth and Remiſſneſs of Men, to the Wickedneſs of their Heart which continually added Inventions of their own to the Worſhip of God; to the Wiles of the great Deceiver, who ſowed Tares among it to choke and to corrupt it; ſo that at laſt it became totally defaced, and gradually waſted into Ignorance and Impiety; and the World could never rectify things without beginning again, enquiring for Maſters, and ſearching for Inſtruction.

And this, I think, every one muſt be convinced of, who examines how he came by any Parts of Knowledge, or obſerves the Progreſs of Children in Learning. What have they that they did not receive? Either from Teachers, who again had their Maſters, or what is the ſame, by reading, which is only an artificial Language and Method of Inſtruction.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, This accounts for the many Defects and ſtrange Ignorance which Philoſophy laboured under, with reſpect to theſe important Points, in which every thing was full of Error and Confuſion. Men affirmed, denied, or explained them as their Fancy led, without any Rule to judge by. This was owing to the Depravation of original Truths, and the Inability of Reaſon either to diſcover them, or rectify Miſtakes which crept into them; which made their Religion ſuch an heap of Abſurdities, their Notions of God ſo impious, and their Acts of Worſhip ſo idolatrous and utterly unbecoming the Divine Nature. For their endleſs and irreconcileable Differences were not confined to the ſpeculative Points, but equally prevailed in the moſt important Rules of Duty, what was lawful or unlawful, right or wrong, what was the chief End or Good of Man, and what were the proper Means for the Attainment of Happineſs. Nothing of which could have happened, if divine Subjects were either immediate Objects of the Underſtanding, or had at firſt proceeded from any Acts of Reflexion or Abſtraction; for then Men would either have retained juſt Ideas, or at leaſt ſuch worthy Apprehenſions as *Noah*, *Abraham*, &c. confeſſedly taught; or elſe in the Courſe of ſo many Ages and ſevere Application, would certainly have retrieved them by the ſame Operations of the Mind which at firſt diſcovered them.

But nothing of this appears, nor do we hear of any means of Knowledge, but their Fathers relating what they had received from their Anceſtors. A Relation of bare Names and Facts without the Reaſons of them; for the true Notions and Reaſons of things became ſoon corrupted or loſt after the Diſperſion. They had ſome general Terms and Propoſitions tranſmitted to them; but that they underſtood them not, is evident, becauſe they never could

could give any tolerable account of them: For whenever they attempted to give Reaſons for their Opinions, they perverted and depraved them, and the more they commented upon Truth, the more did they corrupt it. It was by their own vain Speculations that they reaſoned out of the World the inviſible things of God, which had been ſome way or other related to them, and changed theſe, with the plain Narrations of Fact and Hiſtory, into Fable, Superſtitions, Extravagancies, and a Lye.

Even *Serranus* can allow that *Plato* ſpake many things which he underſtood not, drawn out of the *Phœnician* or *Syrian* Theology. Theſe *Plato* frequently mentions, and calls them ἀπόῤῥητοι, Ineffable and unintelligible. For as their Traditions were of *Hebrew* Extraction, and ſuch as referred to the *Jewiſh* Myſteries and divine Worſhip; it is no wonder they were Unintelligible to the wiſeſt Heathens. Therefore *Plato* calls them μῦθοι, Fables, which in their philoſophical Notion ſignify ſome Myſteries handed down from the Ancients, the Reaſons whereof were hidden and unknown. The learned *Julius Scaliger* affirms the ſame; that *Plato* took many things out of the *Phœnician* Theology which he underſtood not; and meeting with many *Jewiſh* Records or Traditions concerning divine Myſteries, without underſtanding the Senſe or Import of them, he called them Fables; and truly made ſuch of them, notwithſtanding the Aſſiſtance of Allegory or Mythology. Exercit. 61.

Theſe Traditions however furniſhed *Plato*'s Philoſophy with all the divine Truths in it. And becauſe he could not clear or explain them, *Ariſtotle* rejected them, and this whole Mode of Philoſophy, becauſe his Reaſon could not comprehend them. He would truſt to no other Guide, but as *Simplicius* obſerves, confining himſelf to the Sphere of his own Reaſon, would needs examine divine Matters by Nature,

ture, and admit nothing but what he thought was grounded on the Light of Nature, or his own corrupt Reaſon. Now if *Plato* underſtood them, ſurely he could have explained the Reaſons to the Capacity of his Scholar: Or if theſe Truths were at firſt diſcovered by the Operations of Reaſon, it is altogether unconceivable that ſo profound and diſcurſive a Mind as that of *Ariſtotle* ſhould not diſcern the Meaning and Reaſons of them; but alſo fall into ſo many erroneous contrary Opinions; that the World was Eternal, governed by Nature or Chance, the Soul an Act of the Body, *&c.* He rejected Truth, becauſe he could not prove it; and undertook to prove what was totally diſtant from Truth, and therefore not capable of Proof; and ſo becomes a moſt pregnant Argument, that no Reaſon however elevated could diſcover divine Objects; ſince it cannot rightly judge of them when propoſed to its Contemplation, except it be inſtructed in the Reaſon and Nature of them, and that by a Maſter more skilful than *Plato* was.

To which may be added, that the wiſeſt Men of old, never thought that divine Objects were to be ſpun out of the Bowels of the Mind by Ideas of Reflexion and Abſtraction. They ſtay'd not at home to conſult their own Reaſonings, but traverſed the World, and ſpent great part of their Lives in ſearching for Maſters and Inſtruction. And it is evident that they who converſed moſt abroad, did ſpeak far more agreeably to the true Account of things, than ſuch who only endeavoured by their own Wits to improve or correct thoſe Principles which were delivered by others; which muſt be, becauſe they did not depend upon Reaſon, and that the Univerſal Tradition of the firſt Ages was preſerved far better in the Eaſt, than in *Greece* or other Nations. But it was great Vanity or Ignorance

rance in *Plato*, after ſuch frequent Confeſſions of the *Greeks* receiving their Knowledge from the *Barbarians*, to ſay in his *Epinomis*, that they put it in a better Faſhion; whereas the moſt ancient of them, eſpecially the Poets, ſo disfigured Traditions by Conceits of their own, that they never recovered their priſtine Form. And afterwards a *Greek* Dreſs always ſerved to diſguiſe and conceal from whence they had them.

And the Reaſon why theſe indefatigable Purſuers of Wiſdom ſucceeded no better in their laudable Attempts, was, that tho' they ſought for Inſtruction, yet they could not find Maſters, but ſuch who were at the greateſt loſs themſelves in theſe important Points. The ancient Myſteries of God, Creation, Providence, *&c.* were become broken incoherent Fragments, their Sublimity and Greatneſs not apprehended in any due Meaſure; they had undergone ſtrange Alterations according to the Vanity or Opinion of different Ages, ſo that they ſcarce bore any Reſemblance of their original Truth and Beauty: And it was a Task too hard for human Minds to rectify them, pare off the Errors, ſeparate Truth from Falſhood, reſtore the true Meaning, or ſee the Reaſons ſo, as to give any tolerable Account of them.

But nothing of this could have happened, if the Mind were naturally capable of diſcerning them, or producing Ideas of them by any internal Operation, Abſtraction, or Reflexion. For to diſcern a thing, muſt imply ſome Reſemblance of its Nature, Truth, and Being, as it is; and an Ability to explain, or give ſome Account of it to others. But this they could not do, they had neither ſufficient Knowledge to ſatisfy themſelves, nor the Reaſons of them to convince others. Therefore every Scholar took the Liberty to diſſent from his Maſter, nothing was agreed or concluded on; but the ſublimeſt Truths

continued the Subjects of Debate, Diſſenſion, and Contradiction, in all the Schools of Philoſophy, as long as they ſubſiſted in the World.

From whence alſo another great Argument might be inferred, to ſhew how entirely divine Knowledge depends upon Inſtruction; and that is, the Difference between a Chriſtian and a Philoſopher: How inferior the Light of an *Auguſtan* Age, in theſe Subjects, was to that of a Child trained up in the School of Chriſt: A Topick which the primitive Doctors never failed to boaſt of: That their Farmers, Ditchers, and Herdſmen, knew more of the Nature of God, his Dealings with Men, his Acts of Creation, Providence, *&c.* than ever *Plato* or *Ariſtotle* did.

Theodoret. Serm. 5. p. 81.

But this, and ſeveral other Points, I only touch upon at preſent; reſerving a fuller Diſcuſſion of them, for a more proper place in ſome following part of this Work.

The Sum is, that divine Truths are not immediate Objects of the Underſtanding; for then we ſhould be able to have a full Idea, Knowledge, or Comprehenſion of them. But they are mediately ſo, by Communication, and what therefore we can have no Apprehenſions or Notions of, but as they are communicated, or repreſented to us. It is this gives Act to that Capacity of the Mind, which was only potential before: For as Objects are viſible to the natural Eye, but not without the Interpoſition of Light; ſo neither are heavenly Objects to the Intellect, but by the Intervention of ſome Agent, which can be only God.

This the greateſt of Philoſophers (would we but attend to him) plainly aſſerts; *That Faith* (the Belief and Knowledge of heavenly Subjects, the only Evidence of things not ſeen) *cometh by Hearing* (through the Senſes) *and hearing by the Word of God*, which is the Revelation of his Will.

If

If then Senſation and Inſtruction by the help of Language (which is the Inſtrument of Thought, and Conveyor of Notices from one Mind to another) be the only Inlets of Knowledge, whereby the Mind can receive Information of any Object external to itſelf, whether viſible or inviſible; which I think every impartial Inquirer into the Method of his coming at Knowledge, muſt allow; and no Ideas of Senſation can of themſelves create or raiſe Conceptions of inſenſible Things, which they cannot poſſibly take Cogniſance of: Then it muſt follow, that all our Stock of ſpiritual Knowledge, whereby we are enabled to contemplate, or in any meaſure apprehend the Natures, Attributes, or Relations of inviſible immaterial Objects, muſt proceed wholly from Language and Inſtruction. Nothing therefore need be added concerning the Fourth Inlet of Knowledge, or the Ideas of Reflexion: They having, throughout the precedent Diſcourſe, been proved abſurd and impoſſible; as the Mind has no Power, by its own Operations, to add the leaſt Idea, or freſh Materials to its Store of Knowledge. It can divide or compound them, and thereby raiſe Monſters in the Imagination, the ſeveral Parts of which, when duly ſeparated, will be found no other than ſeveral Ideas of Senſation unnaturally jumbled together.

And conſequently an End might be here put to any further Inquiry concerning the Religion or Law of Nature. For if all Religion, Morality, and Law are founded on the divine Perfections; and unaſſiſted Reaſon could never attain a Knowledge of ſpiritual Objects and Truths, ſuch as the divine Nature and Will, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State; it is utterly impoſſible that it ſhould find out a ſufficient Rule of Life, to direct Man to his final Happineſs and End. "For, as Mr. *Locke* L. 1. c. 3. "argues, what Duty is, cannot be underſtood without §. 12.

" a Law; nor a Law be known, or ſuppoſed with-
" out a Law-maker, or without Reward and Pu-
" niſhment. So that it is impoſſible that any prac-
" tical Principle ſhould be innate, *i. e.* be imprinted
" on the Mind as a Duty, without ſuppoſing the
" Ideas of God, of Law, of Obligation, of Pu-
" niſhment, of a Life after this, Innate. But none
" of theſe, not even the Idea of God is innate, nor
" to be attained by Reflexion on Ideas of Senſa-
" tion: Therefore whatever way we come at the
" Knowledge of things themſelves, by that only
" can we know the Relations neceſſarily flowing
" from, and depending on them; if by Inſtruc-
" tion only we are acquainted with the Lawgiver,
" by the ſame means alone muſt we be acquainted
" with his Law, or the Rule of our Duty."

For our greater Satisfaction however, I ſhall proceed to examine what this Law or Religion of Nature is; and what thoſe Arguments are which have ſo univerſally perſuaded Mankind, that Reaſon or the Light of Nature is capable of ſuch a Diſcovery, as to form to itſelf a perfect Law, or Rule of acting.

But here I cannot omit taking notice of a learned and ingenious Eſſay upon the Inlets of human Knowledge, publiſhed ſince the writing of the above Sheets; and between which there ſeems to be little difference, except in the Terms uſed of Language and Inſtruction, which certainly import the ſame thing. Therefore I made no Alteration in this Chapter; ſince I apprehend my Sentiments to be agreeable to, if not perfectly the ſame with thoſe of that excellent Author.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the Law of Nature.

IN the Inquiry into the Law of Nature, the Queſtion is, whether Man be endued with ſuch natural Abilities, that by a due Uſe of them he can attain the Knowledge of whatever is requiſite to the End and Perfection of his Being; or has Faculties, which, without the Aid of Revelation, can diſcover a ſufficient Rule and Law of Duty to inſtruct and direct him in all things needful to be known or done, for the Attainment of his final Happineſs.

That the Point may be truly ſtated, we ſhall firſt ſee what they underſtand by the Law of Nature, who affirm it is diſcoverable by the bare Light of Reaſon.

From the Ancients, the Teſtimony of *Cicero* may ſuffice, who abounds in this Subject, though he is not always ſtrictly conſiſtent with himſelf. He defines it to be, *Vera ratio, naturæ congruens, diffuſa in omnes, conſtans, ſempiterna,* "That right Reaſon, which is conſonant to Nature, what all are "Partakers of, immutable and eternal." And again, *Eſt enim lex nihil aliud niſi recta & à numine Deorum tracta ratio, imperans honeſta, prohibens contraria,* "The Law is nothing elſe but right Reaſon de-"rived from the Gods, commanding Good, and "forbidding Evil." And in numberleſs Places he makes Univerſal Conſent the diſtinguiſhing Character of this Law. *Omni in re conſenſio omnium gentium, lex naturæ putanda eſt.* "That whatever all "Nations conſent to, muſt be deemed as the Law

De Repub. in fragment, p. 585.

Philip. 11. p. 529.

Tuſc. Q. l. 1. n. 13.

Fragment. ut ſupra. "of Nature. Nor is there any other Expounder "or Interpreter of this Law to be ſought for; "there will not be one Law at *Rome*, and another "at *Athens*; one in this Age, another hereafter; "but one immutable eternal Law obliges all Nati-"ons and Ages; for what all conſent to, muſt ne-"ceſſarily be true."

Nat. D. l. 1. n. 17.

Amongſt the Moderns we may be concluded by the Authorities of *Hooker*, *Grotius*, *Puffendorf*, *Wilkins*, and *Clarke*.

Eccl. Polit. l. 1. §. 8.

The judicious *Hooker* thus expreſſes himſelf: "The "natural Meaſure whereby to judge of our Do-"ings, is the Sentence of Reaſon determining and "ſetting down what is good to be done, and "therefore muſt be done; and the Law of Rea-"ſon or human Nature is that which Men by diſ-"courſe of natural Reaſon have rightly found out "themſelves to be all for ever bound to in their "Actions; which Laws are inveſtigable by Rea-"ſon, without the help of Revelation; there being "nothing in it, but what any Man (having natural "Perfection of Wit and Ripeneſs of Judgment) "may by labour and travel find out. Therefore "the Law of Nature, or, as it may be termed "more fitly, the Law of Reaſon, comprehendeth "all thoſe things which Men by the Light of "their Underſtanding evidently know, or at leaſt "wiſe Men may know, to be ſeeming or unſeem-"ing, virtuous or vicious, good or evil for them "to do. There are in it ſome things which ſtand "as Principles; and out of theſe Principles, which "are in themſelves evident, the greateſt moral "Duties we owe towards God or Man, may with-"out any great Difficulty be concluded."

De Jur. Bel. & Pac. l. 1. c. 1. §. 10.

Hugo Grotius defines the Law of Nature, "To "be the Dictate of right Reaſon, ſhewing the moral "Turpitude or moral Obligation of any Action, "from its Agreement or Diſagreement with na-"tural

" tural Reaſon, and conſequently that ſuch Action
" is commanded, or prohibited by God the Au-
" thor of Nature."

Guil. Grotius defines it, " To be the Law which De Princip. Jur. Natural. c. 1. §. 10.
" God, as the Author of Nature, has implanted
" in the Hearts of all Men, to diſcern Virtue from
" Vice, commanding the one, forbidding the
" other."

Puffendorf ſays, " The Law of Nature is to be L. 2. c. 3. §. 13.
" drawn from Man's Reaſon, flowing from the
" true Current of the Faculty when unperverted,
" and without the extraordinary Aſſiſtance of
" Revelation may be ſolidly found out and de-
" monſtrated by the bare force of Reaſon, ſuch as
" God firſt implanted, and ſtill preſerves in Man-
" kind."

Biſhop *Wilkins* thus deduces it, " Religion is that Nat. Relig.
" general Habit of Reverence towards the Divine
" Nature, whereby we are enabled and inclined to
" worſhip and ſerve God after ſuch a manner as we
" conceive moſt agreeable to his Will, ſo as to
" procure his Favour and Bleſſing. I call that
" Natural Religion which Men might know, and
" ſhould be obliged unto by the mere Principles of
" Reaſon, improved by Conſideration and Expe-
" rience, without the help of Revelation. This com-
" prehends under it theſe three principal Things.
" *Firſt*, A Belief and Acknowledgment of the Di-
" vine Nature and Exiſtence. *Secondly*, Due Appre-
" henſions of his Excellencies and Perfections.
" *Thirdly*, Suitable Affections and Demeanour to-
" wards him."

Dr. *Clarke*, " That the primary and original Vol. 1. Serm. 13.
" Law of God, is the Law of Nature; that eter-
" nal and unchangeable Law of Morality, which
" neceſſarily ariſes from the Nature of Creatures,
" and from their Relation to God, and each
" other. And the Wiſdom of this Law is the

" very ſame as the Wiſdom of God's Creation it-
" ſelf, being nothing elſe than the Univerſal Be-
" nefit and Happineſs of all reaſonable Creatures,
" ariſing from their acting according to that Na-
" ture which God has given them, and according to
" the reſpective Relations wherein they are placed
" thereby."

But we ſhall more diſtinctly learn the Extent and Obligation of this Law from the Explanation and Deſcriptions given of it by learned Men.

Id. L. 2. § 8. Thus *Hooker*: " The Law of Nature is an in-
" fallible Knowledge imprinted in the Minds of all
" the Children of Men, whereby both general Prin-
" ciples for directing of human Actions are compre-
" hended, and Concluſions derived from them;
" and it directs in ſuch ſort, that we muſt in all
L. 3. § 9. " things for ever do according to it; for the gene-
L. 1. § 8. " ral and perpetual Voice of Men is as the Sentence
" of God himſelf: For that which all Men have at
" all times learned, Nature herſelf muſt needs have
" taught, and God being the Author of Nature,
" her Voice is but his Inſtrument. By her, from
" him, we receive whatſoever in ſuch ſort we learn.
" Infinite Duties there are, the Goodneſs whereof is
" by this Rule ſufficiently manifeſted, altho' we had
" no other Warrant beſides to approve them. St.
" *Paul* ſays concerning the Heathen, *that they are a*
" *Law unto themſelves*; his Meaning is, that by the
" force of the Light of Reaſon, wherewith God illu-
" minateth every one which cometh into the World,
" Men being enabled to know Truth from Falſhood,
" and Good from Evil, do therefore learn in many
" things what the Will of God is: Which Will
" himſelf not revealing by any extraordinary means
" unto them, but they by natural Diſcourſe attain-
" ing the Knowledge thereof, ſeem the Makers of
1. § 8. " thoſe Laws, which indeed are his, and they but
" only the Finders of them out; whether they im-
" port

" port our Duty towards God or towards Man;
" and by Degrees of Diſcourſe the Minds even of
" mere natural Men have attain'd to know not on-
" ly that there is a God, but alſo what Power,
" Force, Wiſdom, and other Properties that God
" hath, and how all things depend on him."

Biſhop *Stillingfleet* ſays, " That the Idea of God Orig. Sac.
" is really imprinted on the Minds of Men, by that l. 3, c. 1.
" God whoſe Idea it is: And this Idea is a natural §. 6.
" Reſult from the free Uſe of our Reaſon and Fa- Id.
" culties," (which, with ſubmiſſion to his Lord-
ſhip, are as different Accounts for the ſame thing
as in nature poſſibly can be.) And again: " There Id. §. 12.
" is an indelible Idea of a Deity on the Minds of
" Men, deeply and univerſally planted; and an in- Id.
" delible Character of himſelf printed by himſelf
" upon the Soul."

Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* is full of this Subject in all Vol. 1.
his Works: " Religion, *ſays he*, is a Property of Serm. 1.
" our Natures, and the Notion of a Deity intimate p. 20.
" to our Underſtandings, and ſticks cloſe to them:
" And all Religion is founded in right Notions of Id. Serm.
" God and his Perfections, inſomuch that Divine 41. p. 485.
" Revelation itſelf does ſuppoſe theſe for its Foun-
" dations; and can ſignify nothing to us, unleſs
" they be firſt known and believed: So that the
" Principles of Natural Religion are the Foun-
" dation of that which is revealed; and ſuch Prin-
" ciples are thoſe Apprehenſions which Men na- Id. Serm.
" turally have of the Divine Being and Per- 21. p. 224.
" fections (the Immortality of the Soul, and
" future Rewards of this Life, Vol. 3. Serm. 170.
" p. 465) and the clear Notions of Good and
" Evil, which are imprinted upon our Natures.
" For there is an intrinſecal Good and Evil in Vol. 2.
" Things, and the Reaſons and Reſpects of moral Serm. 88.
" Good and Evil, are fixed and immutable, eter- p. 663.
" nal and indiſpenſable. Nor do they ſpeak ſafely,

" who

" who make the Divine Will the Rule of moral
" Good and Evil, as if there were nothing Good and
" Evil in its own Nature antecedently to the Will of
" God; but that all Things are therefore Good
" and Evil, becauſe God wills them to be ſo.

Vol. 2. Serm. 58. p. 404. " There is a Natural Knowledge of God, and of
" the Duty we owe to him, which the Apoſtle calls
" that of God, which is obvious to be known by the
" Light of Nature, and is as much as is abſolutely
" neceſſary for us to know. His Being and eſſential
" Perfections may be known, which he calls his eter-
" nal Power and God-head: Theſe *are clearly ſeen, be-*
" *ing underſtood by the things which are made, i. e.* The
" Creation of the World is a plain Demonſtration to
" Man of the Being and Power of God; and if ſo,
Id. p. 405. " then God is naturally known to Men; and ſuch
" natural Knowledge of him to be a Being of all
" Perfections, is the ſureſt and ſafeſt hold that Reli-
" gion hath on human Nature."

Id. Serm. 48. p. 338. " There needs nothing more to make any thing
" a Law, than a ſufficient Declaration that it is the
" Will of God; and this God hath ſufficiently ſig-
" nified to Mankind by the very Frame of our Na-
" tures, and of thoſe Principles and Faculties which
" he hath endued us withal: So that whenever we
" act contrary to theſe, we plainly diſobey the Will
" of him that made us, and violate thoſe Laws
Id. p. 340. " which he hath enacted in our Natures, and writ-
" ten in our Hearts; which all the World, except
Id. Serm. 57. p. 402. " the Jews, were guided by, being a Light which
" God ſet up in every Man's Mind: And theſe Na-
" tural Notions which all Men have of God, if they
" had in any meaſure attended to them, and go-
" verned themſelves by them, might have been ſuf-
" ficient to have preſerved them from diſhonouring
" the Deity."

Id. Serm. 49. p. 346. " Natural Religion is Obedience to the natural
" Law, and the Performance of ſuch Duties as
" na tu-

" natural Light, without any expreſs and ſupernatural Revelation, doth dictate to Men. Theſe " lie at the bottom of all Religion, and are the " great fundamental Duties which God requires of " all Mankind. Theſe are the ſureſt and moſt ſacred " of all other Laws; thoſe which God hath riveted " in our Souls, and written upon our Hearts; and " theſe are what we call moral Duties, and moſt valued by God, which are of eternal and perpetual " Obligation, becauſe they do naturally oblige without any particular and expreſs Revelation from God; " and theſe are the Foundation of revealed and inſtituted Religion, and all revealed Religion does " ſuppoſe them, and build upon them. And it is revealed Religion that calls Men to the Practice of " natural Duties." Id. Serm. 48. p. 341. Id. Serm. 49. p. 344. Id. p. 346. Id. 349.

" And no one and conſtant Reaſon can be given " for Univerſal Conſent to theſe, but from the " Frame and Nature of Man's Mind and Underſtanding, which hath the Notion of a Deity ſtamped " upon it, or, which is all one, hath ſuch an Underſtanding, as will in its own free Uſe find out a " God: So God's revealing or declaring ſuch a " thing to us, is no neceſſary Argument that it is " ſo, unleſs, antecedently to this Revelation, we be " poſſeſſed firmly with this Principle, that *whatever* " *God ſays is true*; *and whatever is known antecedently to Revelation, muſt be known by natural Light*, " *and by Reaſonings and Deductions from natural Principles*. Theſe natural Notions of God are the " only Standard and Meaſure to judge of Divine " Revelations, and of the Difference of Moral " Good and Evil." Vol. 3. Serm. 170. p. 465. Vol. 2. Serm. 58. p. 406.

Mr. *Locke* ſays, " That God hath not left himſelf without a Witneſs, ſince we have Senſe, Perception and Reaſon, and cannot want a clear " Proof of him, as long as we carry ourſelves about " us." Eſſay H. Underſt. l. 4. c. 10. § 1. p. 373.

" us. Nor can we juſtly complain of our Ignorance,
" ſince he has ſo plentifully provided us with the
" means to diſcover and know him, ſo far as is ne-
" ceſſary to the End of our Being, and the great
" Concernment of Happineſs; for he hath furniſh-
L. 1. c. 4. § 12. p. 31. " ed Man with thoſe Faculties which will ſerve to
" diſcover all things requiſite; and the Knowledge
L. 1. c. 4. § 17. p. 34. " of God is the moſt natural Diſcovery of human
" Reaſon. It is within our reach, and we cannot
L. 4. c. 10. §. 6. " miſs it, if we will but apply our Minds to that
" as we do to ſeveral other Enquiries."

p. 374. Vol. 2. p. 46. Dr. *Clarke:* " That the Mind or rational Facul-
" ty can no otherways avoid perceiving the natural
" Dictates of Reaſon with regard to things preſent,
" or its Judgment concerning what is paſt, or its
" Apprehenſions of what is to come, but by forci-
" bly withdrawing its Attention from this its pro-
" per Object, and fixing it entirely and habitually
" upon Matters of Senſe; for by the Light of Na-
Vol. 1. p. 8. " ture, the Being and Attributes of God were cer-
" tain and demonſtrable; the Probability of a fu-
" ture State was great and undeniable; the Expec-
" tation of God's dealing mercifully with Sinners
Vid Diſc. 2d Contents. " was reaſonable and hopeful; that the Law of Na-
" ture is eternal, univerſal, and abſolutely unchange-
" able; for that certain moral Obligations, particu-
" larly of Piety towards God, Righteouſneſs to-
" wards one another, and Sobriety to ourſelves, na-
" turally and neceſſarily ariſe from the eternal and
" neceſſary Differences of things; and that all ra-
" tional Creatures are obliged to govern themſelves
" in all their Actions by the eternal Reaſon of
" things; foraſmuch as ſuch eternal moral Obliga-
" tions are antecedent in ſome reſpect to the Con-
" ſideration of their being the Will or Command of
" God himſelf."

Dr. Fiddes, vol. 2d p. 22. Others teach, " That the Law of Reaſon is that
" inward and true Light, whereby alone the proper
Bounds

" Bounds and Meaſures of Good and Evil are to be
" aſcertained; and that it is highly agreeable to the
" Goodneſs and Wiſdom of God, that he ſhould afford P. 25.
" us ſuch a Meaſure of Light, as may be ſufficient to
" direct us both in our Judgment and our Practice:
" But if we will not attend to the Light, or follow
" it, the Fault is not to be charged upon any Defect
" in it, but on an inexcuſable Abuſe of our own Li-
" berty and the Divine Goodneſs; for antecedently
" to any poſitive Law or Declaration of God's Will,
" Man had this Rule given him, whereby he was to
" conduct himſelf."

The Reaſons for this are aſſigned by ſeveral, Intellect. and thus by Dr. *Cudworth*: " That the Divine Syſtem, l. 1. c. 5: " Will, and Omnipotence itſelf hath no Imperium p. 718. " over the Divine Underſtanding; for if God un-
" derſtood only by Will, he would not underſtand
" at all." And Laws depend not on the Will of Morality, the Commander, but on natural Juſtice and c. 2. p. 18. Equity, which give to one the Right and Authority of Commanding, and beget in another Duty and Obligation to Obedience. Nor is it the Id. 21. meer Will and Pleaſure of him that commandeth, that obligeth to do poſitive things commanded, but the intellectual Nature of him that is commanded. For if even this were not morally good and juſt in its own Nature, before any poſitive Command of God, that God ſhould be obeyed by his Creatures, the bare Will of God himſelf could not beget an Obligation upon any to do what he willed and commanded, becauſe the Nature of Things doth not depend upon Will, being not Things that are arbitrarily made, but Things that are—and every thing is what it is by Nature and not by Will. Id. p. 14. For when Things exiſt, they are what they are, 17. 16. this or that, abſolutely or relatively, not by Will or arbitrary Command, but by the Neceſſity of their own Natures: There is no ſuch thing as an arbi-

trarious

trarious Eſſence, Mode or Relation; for an arbitrarious Eſſence is a Being without a Nature, a Contradiction, and therefore a Non-Entity: The Modes of all ſubſiſtent Beings, and the Relations of Things to one another, are immutably and neceſſarily what they are, and not arbitrary, being not by Will but by Nature; Omnipotence or infinite Power itſelf being determined hereby; for Power has no Dominion over Underſtanding, Truth and Knowledge: And even the Will of God without Wiſdom, is a plumbean flexible Rule. And tho' it be the Efficient Cauſe of all Things, yet it is not the Formal Cauſe of any Thing beſides itſelf. And it is impoſſible that any Command of God ſhould oblige, otherwiſe than by virtue of that which is naturally juſt, *&c.*

Intellect. Syſt. Id. p. 719.

Morality, c. 3. p. 35 --15.

The Authorities here cited are very great, and perhaps which no one ought to diſſent from without a Diſtruſt of his own Opinion; yet every one's Judgment, after having carefully and impartially endeavoured to inform it, muſt be his own Director. It is as impoſſible to ſubmit to the Dictates of others, or embrace for Truth what the Mind does not apprehend to be ſuch, as it is to ſee with their Eyes, or hear with their Ears. And at the ſame time I may be convinced of the Error of one Hypotheſis, without being able to ſuggeſt a better; or give ſuch Arguments for the Certainty of what I would ſubſtitute in its place, as the Principles whereon it is founded may be capable of, and if juſtly ſtated might fully eſtabliſh it. But to propoſe our Doubts with Caution and Modeſty, in order to have them cleared up to the Satisfaction of our ſelves and others, can never prejudice the Cauſe of Truth, if the Method we inquire for it in, equally tends to the Eſtabliſhment of Religion, and leads our Thoughts upwards to the Adoration of that Infinite Majeſty, whoſe Glory is the ultimate Aim of all

all human Actions. No one will ſay that the Divine Wiſdom could not have directed Mankind by different ways to the ſame End; and as Obedience to the Divine Will is the whole Duty and End of Man, whether he diſcovered his Will by Reaſon or Revelation, the knowing it to be ſuch, makes it a Law to us, and his Commands will have the ſame Force and Obligation. But by which of theſe Methods he has been pleaſed to communicate it, is the Subject of the preſent Inquiry.

And here one cannot but obſerve, that moſt of our great Divines expreſs themſelves on this Subject, as if the Principles of Natural Religion were really Innate, though they were convinced of the Abſurdity of ſuch Notion, and the Inconſiſtency of eſtabliſhing Rules which muſt not be queſtioned, and cannot be proved, but admitted as the unerring Deciders of Truth and Falſhood. What could this proceed from but the Difficulties they met with, in lifting up the dim Taper of Reaſon to diſcover inviſible Glories beyond the Stars? This made them ſo often recoil, relinquiſh Reaſon, and be willing the Controverſy ſhould be determined by an Oracle, or Judge, without any Authority but what they inveſt him with. To all which there is one unanſwerable Objection, that were the Notion of God ſtamped by himſelf on the Minds of Men, the Impreſſion would be a fair Tranſcript of his Nature; and it would be common to all Nations and Languages, as univerſal as our Senſes and Paſſions, what no Diſtance of Time, or Difference of Education could alter or deface. But their original Suppoſition of theſe inward Impreſſions, Ideas, Furniture, *&c.* being abſolutely falſe, therefore ſuch muſt be all their Inferences from it.

I ſhall however underſtand them in another Senſe, that the Duties of Natural Religion are ſo clear and evident to Reaſon, that whoever duly exerciſes thoſe rational

rational Faculties wherewith every Man is endowed, cannot be ignorant of them; but may find out ſome Principles from which they are to be clearly and ſolidly deduced, and thereby come at the Knowledge of the whole Religion or Law of Nature.

And from the above Deſcription of it, we may collect both what it is, and whence attainable. *Firſt*, That all moral Obligations depend on the Excellencies and Perfections of the divine Nature, conſequently that before any Man can comprehend what they are, or can be obliged by them, he muſt diſcover and eſtabliſh a firm Belief of the Divine Exiſtence and Attributes. And from this Knowledge of God, which is the moſt natural Diſcovery of human Reaſon, we cannot miſs finding out (if we will but apply our Minds to it) whatever is requiſite to the End of our Being, and the great Concernment of Happineſs, *i.e.* whatever is ſeemly or unſeemly, virtuous or vitious, good or evil, fit or unfit for us to do, in all the Inſtances of Duty we owe to God or Man; and ſo it becomes a ſufficient Declaration of the Divine Will, or what God requires of all Mankind. Natural Religion is nothing elſe but Obedience to the Natural Law, and it is called the Law of Nature, becauſe there is nothing in it but what Man may find out, and be obliged unto by the mere Principles of Reaſon, without the Help of Revelation.

Secondly, That theſe Things are obvious to be known by the Light of Nature, may be proved from theſe three Arguments. 1. The expreſs Teſtimony of Scripture. 2. The Works of Creation. 3. The eternal Difference and Reaſons of Things; from all which theſe Obligations naturally and neceſſarily ariſe. Theſe ſeem to be the great Foundations and Supports of Natural Religion, and ſhall therefore be ſeparately examined.

But

But, *Firſt*, We muſt conſider whether the Law of Nature be in fact what it is repreſented to us: And in doing this, there cannot be a more unexceptionable Method, than to fix on ſome certain Marks and Characters, by which it is known and diſtinguiſhed from others, or which conſtitute it what it is; and then examine, whether they can truly be affirmed of it. Now we find that all the great Maintainers of it agree in theſe three principal Characters.

Firſt, That it is univerſal, or attainable by all Men.

Secondly, That it is clear; And

Thirdly, That it is perfect. If it has an unexceptionable Right to theſe Properties, we may rely upon it, as a ſafe Guide to God and Happineſs: If it fails in any, or all of theſe, we may, and in juſtice ought to look out for another.

1. It muſt be univerſal or attainable by all; for the End of the Law being Obedience to what it requires, it muſt be diſcoverable by all thoſe who are to be directed by it; and neither Law, nor any thing elſe can be called natural, that may not be equally affirmed of every Individual, not defective in its kind. If therefore Man be the Workmanſhip of God, and intended for Happineſs; it muſt neceſſarily follow, that every Man in every Age has had ſufficient Abilities, and proper Means granted him for the Knowledge of it. Becauſe nothing can be a Law, or have an obligatory Power, further than it is capable of being apprehended, or known to him who is to obey it. For if the Sanctions of an unknown Law were to take place, Puniſhment would be neceſſary and unavoidable, which is not to be reconciled with infinite Juſtice and Mercy.

Secondly, It muſt be clear: So that whoever ſeriouſly endeavours to find out Truth, may not miſs of, or avoid knowing it; for as nothing but a full Conviction of its being true, can make us receive

it as the Law of our Beings; ſo no Precept can be clear, which after due Conſideration and Attention a Man does not diſcern the Truth of. If it be only probable, we muſt ſuſpend our Aſſent, becauſe where Probabilities are equal, the Judgment cannot fix its Choice. If it be doubtful, we muſt refuſe our Aſſent; for we cannot believe what we do not know, nor know what we cannot tell whether it be true or falſe: And from that of which we have no clear or comprehenſive Notion, we can make no clear or certain Inferences, and ſo can have no certain Evidence that we are under Obligation to Obedience. In ſuch momentous Caſes therefore as relate to the final End of Man, if the Law be not perſpicuous, a Man may fall into Error, and yet not be chargeable with a Fault; the Rule was not ſufficient, and his Conſcience will not accuſe him for doing what he was not able to avoid. For if any thing we cannot know, or knowing cannot do, be a Condition of Happineſs, we muſt be under a Neceſſity of being unhappy; that being neceſſary, which cannot be otherwiſe.

Thirdly, It muſt be perfect, or contain whatever is requiſite to Knowledge or Practice: And if all Men are not by Nature able to know the whole of their Duty, or whatever is neceſſary to regulate their Actions towards God, themſelves, and one another, the Law would be imperfect, or not ſufficient to the End for which it was inſtituted: a Man cannot be obliged but by ſome Law; if that be deficient, and yet he under Obligation, he muſt be unavoidably ignorant of his Duty, or compelled to know, what he had neither Means or Power to come at the Knowledge of. And an imperfect Law is a Rule, and no Rule; or in other words, a manifeſt Contradiction. Beſides, if the Neglect of Duty ſubjects Offenders to Puniſhment, and the Particulars of Duty are not diſcoverable, then Puniſhment

niſhment would be inflicted where no Fault has been committed, which is Injuſtice. But as where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion; ſo there can be no Tranſgreſſion, where the Law is not ſufficient for our Guidance and Direction.

That theſe Properties muſt belong to this univerſal Law, is evident from the fundamental Principle of Nature, a Deſire of Happineſs. Every Being in Heaven and Earth aſpires to its utmoſt Perfection and Good; and the Perfection of Man, as a moral Agent, muſt conſiſt in the Practice of Virtue and ſhunning of Evil, and conforming himſelf as far as he is able to the Divine Excellencies, on which all Religion and Law depend. If Reaſon be not ſufficient for this, if it is not able at all times to inſtruct all the Sons of Men in what is commanded or forbidden; if it cannot explicitely prove the Divine Exiſtence, declare his Attributes, manifeſt his Will, and ſhew how all moral Duties derive their Obligation from them; then Reaſon is not of it ſelf able to direct us to that Happineſs whereof we are capable, what we naturally deſire, and which conſtitutes the Perfection of our Beings; nor can any Law of its own Diſcovery be perfect, clear, or univerſal.

And let the Arguments to prove it ſo, be never ſo ſpecious, yet if the Concluſions be contrary to known Fact, Experience, and the Obſervation of Nature, they cannot be admitted; if Impoſſibilities, they muſt be rejected; and to ſay a thing is poſſible for a rational Agent to do, which no ſuch Agent with the utmoſt Perfection and Exerciſe of his Faculties ever did do, is ſcarce to be diſtinguiſhed from an Impoſſibility. Nature is regular in her Actings, and ſuffers not her Powers to lie uſeleſs; never to do a thing, or not to have Power to do it, are with her equivalent Terms; and ſuch are Faculties never exerciſed, or Means that never

proved effectual. And no Inſtance can be given of any Perſon, Nation, or Age, wherein the above Characters can be affirmed of the Law of Nature, that it was perfect, clear, and univerſal.

Another Fallacy that lurks under all the Arguments produced in favour of Natural Religion, is, the taking it for granted, that the Heathen World was utterly deſtitute of all the Benefits accruing from Revelation, which is abſolutely groundleſs and falſe; or in concluding that what Knowledge the wiſer Pagans had of divine Matters, they got it by the Light of Reaſon only, without any other Aſſiſtance or Inſtruction; which is contrary to Fact, Hiſtory, and their own Confeſſion: And if they deſerve Credit in any Caſe, it muſt be in this; wherein Truth ſo far triumphed over that common Paſſion of Men, to have the Diſcoveries of important Things paſs for their own, that they ingenuouſly tell us where and from whom they got the Information of them. And the whole Iſſue of this Controverſy muſt reſt upon theſe ſingle Points, whether they had a competent or tolerable Knowledge of ſupernatural Truths, and whether the Knowledge they had of them was from their own Diſcovery or Experience: For it is impoſſible to do more by the Light of Reaſon than they did.

The Appeal therefore muſt be to them, as the only Judges capable of determining it. And as the Maintainers of the Natural Law conſtantly refer the Deciſion to them, I readily ſubmit thereto, not doubting to make it appear, that in thoſe Ages when there was as much Reaſon and profound Judgment as in any other Period ſince the Creation, their Knowledge in theſe Matters was ſtrangely dark and defective, and the little Light they had was a borrowed one, not their own: And that for a long number of Centuries a barbarous Ignorance covered the Face of the Earth, ſcarce a Man (out

of

of the *Jewiſh* Church) had ſo much as a Notion of God (except the Idea of an Idol be ſuch) the Soul's Immortality, or a future State: And if ſo, Reaſon muſt be a very blind and inſufficient Guide, where out of ſo many Millions of rational Creatures, in diſtant Ages and Countries, it could not direct above three or four to Truth and Happineſs. It will alſo appear that wherever the traditionary Notices of revealed Things were almoſt extinguiſhed, Reaſon could never reſtore, or give any Account of them; even where the Names remained, the Explanation of them was abominable and ridiculous. Whereas had Reaſon once diſcovered theſe things, the ſame Procedure of the Mind would have been univerſally plain and obvious at all Times and in all Nations, which never was the Caſe. This ſhall be at large made out in the enſuing Parts of this Diſcourſe.

And whoever will take a ſerious View of the Law of Nature in its true Light, the moſt important Duties quite obliterated in many Places of the World, ſtrangely mangled and deformed in others, unable to influence or reform Mankind in any, cannot but ſuſpect, that far more glorious things have been ſaid of it, than in Juſtice can be granted to it. And ſuch Doubts muſt be increaſed, on obſerving the many Exceptions its ableſt Defenders are obliged to make from their own general Rules, and give up ſuch Points as utterly deſtroy the Perfection and Univerſality of it.

I might inſtance in one for all, from the celebrated Author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, whoſe very firſt Words are theſe: "The Founda- § 1.
"tion of Religion lies in that Difference between
"the Acts of Men, which diſtinguiſhes them into
"good, evil, and indifferent; for if there be ſuch
"a Difference, there muſt be Religion, & *contra*.
"Upon this account it is that ſuch a long and labo-

" rious Inquiry hath been made after ſome general " Idea, or ſome Rule, by comparing the foreſaid " Acts with which, it might appear to which kind " they reſpectively belong. And tho' Men have not " yet agreed upon any one, yet one there certainly " muſt be. That which I am going to propoſe, " *&c.*" Now may we not from hence juſtly argue, that if the Foundation of Religion lies in the Difference between human Actions; and that Difference can only appear by comparing them with ſome Rule; and yet from the Beginning of the World to this Day, no ſuch Rule of Moral Good and Evil has been agreed upon, whereby Men might know to which kind their Actions reſpectively belong, it is impoſſible there ſhould be any ſuch thing as Natural Religion or Law, becauſe their very Eſſence conſiſts in enabling Men to diſtinguiſh their Actions (and thereby their Choice of acting) whether they are Virtues or Crimes, morally good or evil; if they had no Rule for this, they had no Law, and if no Law, they could not have any Religion, which is nothing but Obedience to Law: Or if they never agreed upon one, and without Agreement there cannot be a Rule, then there is nothing in this Subject obvious, clear, univerſal, or true; but all the Definitions of it muſt be Opinion or Falſhood, becauſe they had no Rule or Method to frame them by. Or (ſince a Rule there certainly muſt be) if Mr. *Wollaſton* found it out, then all the preceding Ages wanted it, there was no ſuch thing exiſting, and it muſt be Mr. *Wollaſton*'s Religion, not Nature's. And if he firſt made the Diſcovery, how could it be owing to Reaſon, ſince the Light of that was as ſtrong three thouſand Years ago as it is now? If it was not from Reaſon that he argued ſo well, and traced out the Lineaments of Law with ſuch Order and Perſpicuity, then it muſt be from Revelation as a Chriſtian, not

as

as a Philoſopher; which is the whole Truth of the Matter: And that ſingle Paſſage tears up the Foundation of his whole Work, and is a Demonſtration, that whatever he ſays after that, is not from Nature, Reaſon, Eternal Fitneſſes, or Univerſal Conſent, but from the Goſpel; and that he only transferred to the Support of one School what he learned in another. And however ſpecious a long Train of Propoſitions may appear to be, yet not one is applicable to the Intent of his Work, that Reaſon could delineate the Law of Nature; ſince by his own Confeſſion it appears, that Reaſon never could find out that Rule which is the Foundation of all Religion; and conſequently if Revelation had not diſcovered it, neither would Mr. *Wollaſton*, nor any greater Genius yet to come.

But beſides, there are, in my Opinion, ſeveral Reaſons why the above Marks and Characters cannot belong to the Law of Nature; why we ought not to ſubſcribe to it as the moſt ſacred of Laws, "The very Ground-work that Revelation ſuppoſes, and is built upon; the very Bottom of all the Duties which God requires of us: So that whatever God ſhould reveal, would ſignify nothing to us, unleſs they be firſt known and believed." Were this Suppoſition true, I muſt confeſs I do not ſee what it would ſignify for God to reveal any thing that was already well known and firmly believed; Revelation would certainly then be uſeleſs, and it is the avowed Intent of Natural Religion to make it ſo. But beſides the Falſhood of this Suppoſition, there are many (and in my Opinion) ſtrong and undeniable Objections againſt it. Abp. Tillotſon.

As, Firſt, It muſt be an unqueſtionable Truth, that the Law of Reaſon cannot be ampler than Reaſon, nor any thing be allowed in its Religion, but what is diſcoverable by the natural and ordinary Uſe of it. The Bounds thereof muſt be fixed to thoſe

Principles, which it can by its own Power clearly inveſtigate, and to ſuch Knowledge as may with Certainty be deduced from them, becauſe no Effect can be more extenſive than its Cauſe: Therefore this Definition of it muſt be falſe, that it contains every thing founded in the Reaſon and Nature of things; ſince the largeſt Underſtandings are ignorant of the Eſſence, Cauſe, Qualities, and Operations even of ſenſible things, and much more of immaterial ones, beſides the infinite Relations that are in the Syſtem of the Univerſe: Therefore Truth, or the Law founded on ſuch Relations, is more extenſive than Reaſon, and what none but the Author of Nature can comprehend, or make known to others; and eſpecially the Excellencies of his own Being, which muſt otherwiſe have been for ever hid from us: For can we know God but by his Attributes, and is there one Attribute we do, or can know? God is ſelf-exiſtent, but it is not poſſible for Man to form a Notion of Being from itſelf, *Ens à ſe*; nor of Eternity in Commencement, Duration, or Succeſſion; nor of Omnipreſence, whether by Multiplication or Extenſion of himſelf to every *Ubi*, or how a Spirit can be extended: We are ignorant what this Omnipreſence is, or how God is or can be ſo. How then could we know it, if he had not declared it? That Reaſon ſhould diſcover a Nature, not one Attribute of which it is able to comprehend, is truly incomprehenſible. It is finding out ſomething without knowing any thing of it. And without a clear Knowledge of the Being we are to worſhip, all Attempts will be in vain to find out the Duties he requires of us.

Secondly, Nothing can be admitted as Principles in any Science, much leſs in Religion, but what carry the higheſt Marks of Self-Evidence with them, what the Mind immediately apprehends and underſtands, or by ſeeing their Connexion with other undoubted

doubted Truths, aſſents to, as ſoon as duly propoſed: For where there is Doubt or Obſcurity in Principles, the Inferences drawn from them muſt be uncertain, and Man be in a perpetual Heſitancy which way he ought to act; and if moral Actions ought to be uniform and conſiſtent, the Rule of them muſt of neceſſity be ſo; for otherwiſe it will prove a Snare inſtead of a Law. That the Heathens had no ſuch clear Principles or fixed Rules Mr. *Wollaſton* confeſſes, and that Sentiments of the moſt important Points were wavering and doubtful, the whole World acknowledges: And if they were furniſhed with Means clearly to diſcern and underſtand the Principles of Natural Religion, and Reaſon was that Means, how could it happen that all Mankind ſhould be ſo unreaſonable as never to make a due Uſe of it, to know ſo little, and perform much leſs? And the wiſeſt of them to be ſo divided in Opinion, and unable to determine in the moſt obvious Caſes of Sin and Duty, and ſo conſtantly to miſtake the one for the other?

Thirdly, If there be any ſuch clear and univerſal Principles, the Doctrines deducible from them will be equally perſpicuous and clear: For when Reaſon finds out Truth, its Procedure is by eſtabliſhing the Evidence of one Propoſition, and then another which depends upon it, and ſo by proper Gradations, and the Uſe of intermediate Proofs, it arrives at others: And let the Train of Arguments be never ſo long, yet if the Mind perceive a clear Connexion between them, the Inference or Concluſion, which is the Truth ſought for, muſt be as certain as any of the intermediate ones: Whoever therefore diſcover Truth in this manner, are able to prove it, and aſſign Reaſons for it, becauſe they can trace it backwards, and ſhew its Dependence upon ſome firſt clear and univerſal Principles. But if Men ſpeak Truth, and yet can give no Reaſons, nor account for it,

they

they may have heard, or ſtumbled on it, but did not diſcover it, as not perceiving how the Evidence of it ariſes: For if they come at it by clear and intermediate Steps, the Certainty of the Concluſion might be proved to others, and rendred as perſpicuous as the Truth and Connexion of the ſeveral Mediums. But there was not one ſpiritual Subject that the Heathens could prove, or give any tolerable Account of; therefore whatever Knowledge they had of ſuch Truths, they did not diſcover, or come at it by any Operations of their own Reaſon.

Fourthly, No Principles can be allowed as univerſal, but what are proved ſo by Fact and Experience; Cauſes muſt be known by their Effects, and Natural Powers by their Productions: And to affirm, that a Man, or Star, or Spirit, or Angel, is capable of Acts which the moſt piercing Judgment never diſcovered, is highly unwarrantable; it is a Falſhood, becauſe we are ignorant of it. If there were then any ſuch univerſal Principles, they muſt be ſhewed from the Effects: The ſame Tree will not produce Grapes this Year, and Figs the next. The Religion of diſtant Ages and Nations would have been correſpondent, becauſe its Principles were natural and univerſal. If it was various and contradictory, there could be no univerſal Rule or Principles to go by: Yet the Religions of the World were different and oppoſite, the moſt ſacred with one was abominable to another. Nor is a tolerable Syſtem of Natural Religion to be collected out of any or all their Writings and Practice: Therefore no Univerſal Principles could ſubſiſt in the Minds of Men. And to ſay that Reaſon could, but did not, or would not do it, is only begging, not proving the Queſtion.

Laſtly, Both Law and Religion muſt ſuppoſe not only Abilities in them who are required to obey, but muſt offer proper Motives to induce them to it; for

for where there is no Motive for doing or not doing a thing, there can be no juſt Ground either to perform it or neglect it, it is quite indifferent. Now the great Motives to the Obſervation of moral Duties, confeſſedly are the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards or Puniſhments. But not one in a Million believed any of theſe things; and the few wiſe Men were too doubtful and uncertain about them, to let them have any due Influence upon their Actions: And therefore the Law of Nature was highly deficient in this moſt eſſential Point, if it can be called a Law, that has not this Sanction, or lays us not under an Obligation to Rewards or Puniſhments.

To prove that theſe Objections and the Inferences drawn from them, are ſtrictly applicable to the Law of Nature, I need only appeal to the ableſt Defenders of it. Thus *Tillotſon*: "As the Corruption and Degeneracy of Mankind grew worſe, "ſo the Light of Nature waxed dimmer and dim-"mer, and the Rule of Good and Evil was more "doubtful and uncertain, and that in very conſi-"derable Inſtances of our Duty. The Law of "*Moſes* was peculiar to the *Jews*: And even "to them it did not give clear and perfect "Light and Direction as to moral Duties, and "thoſe things which are of an eternal and im-"mutable Reaſon and Goodneſs. That the *Jews* "under the Law had ſuch Apprehenſions of their "own Immortality, and of a future State of Hap-"pineſs and Miſery after this Life, as natural "Light ſuggeſted to them; which was in moſt but "a wavering and uncertain Perſuaſion, and conſe-"quently of ſmall Efficacy to engage Men to "their Duty." Vol. 2. Serm. 51. p. 361. Thus Biſhop *Wilkins*. l. 2. c. 9. "Notwithſtanding all that can be ſaid of *Natural* "*Religion*, it cannot be denied, but in this dark "and degenerate State into which Mankind is ſunk, "there

" there is great want of a clearer Light to diſcover " our Duty to us with greater Certainty, and to " put it beyond all doubt and diſpute, what is " the good and acceptable Will of God: And all " theſe Defects are clearly ſupplied by that clear " and perfect Revelation, which God hath made " to the World by our bleſſed Saviour." Can there be a ſtronger Affirmation, that Nature and Reaſon are not able to inſtruct us in our Duty?

Where then could be the Law or Religion of Nature, where there were no plain or certain Rules and Directions for a good Life; no Rule of Good and Evil, but Men were doubtful and uncertain in the moſt conſiderable Inſtances of Duty, and wanted Light to direct them even in moral Duties, tho' of eternal Reaſon and Goodneſs; or where was the Authority or Force of Law, which could offer no Motives to Obedience but ſuch as were faint and languid, wavering and uncertain Perſuaſions, of ſmall Effcacy to engage Men to their Duty? Certainly there is nothing here that deſerves the Name of Religion or Law, not an Article that was clear, or a Motive that could influence.

And Dr. *Clarke* in his celebrated Diſcourſes at Mr. *Boyle*'s Lectures, acknowledges, " There are " whole Nations, that ſeem to have very little No- " tion of God, and a very ſmall Senſe of the Obli- " gations of Morality. That in all Ages Men " had falſe and unworthy Notions of God, or ſu- " perſtitious Apprehenſions concerning him, and " fell into the moſt abſurd Idolatry. That few " Men are able to diſcover the principal Truths of " Morality clearly and plainly for themſelves; there- " fore want to be particularly taught and inſtructed " in their Duty. That in the Heathen World " there were but few (two or three) who ſtudied " and practiſed the Duties of Natural Religion; " yet without any great Succeſs, becauſe the Doc- " trine

Diſc. II. p. 156, &c.

" trine of moſt Philoſophers conſiſted in empty
" Words and Contention, but did not amend the
" Manners, nor was fitted to reform the World;
" and thoſe few had no Knowledge of the whole
" Scheme of Things, the Method of God's go-
" verning the World, his Deſign in creating Man-
" kind, *&c.* Having no Knowledge of this, their
" whole Attempt to diſcover the Truth of Things,
" and to inſtruct others therein, was like wandring
" in the wide Sea, not knowing whither they were
" going, or which way to take, or having any
" Guide to conduct them; for their natural Un-
" derſtanding was as unqualified to find out and
" apprehend theſe things, as the Eyes of Bats to
" behold the Light of the Sun, not even the firſt
" and moſt neceſſary thing of all, the Nature and
" Attributes of God himſelf; theſe were very diffi-
" cult to learn, and more difficult to explain. So,
" of the Manner in which God might be accep-
" tably worſhipped, they were entirely and un-
" avoidably ignorant; for in what particular man-
" ner, or with what kind of Service he will be
" worſhipped, cannot be certainly diſcovered by
" bare Reaſon; even *Socrates* fell lamentably into
" the Practice of the moſt fooliſh Idolatry; nor
" did they know how to reconcile and appeaſe the
" Deity; here Nature ſtops, and expects with Im-
" patience the Aid of ſome particular Revelation.
" They are alſo moſt doubtful, uncertain, and un-
" ſteady about the moſt neceſſary Truths, the Im-
" mortality of the Soul, the Uncertainty of a fu-
" ture State, and the Rewards and Puniſhments
" to be diſtributed in a Life to come. *Socrates* at
" his Death, and *Cicero*, knew not whether the
" Soul was mortal or immortal; which is moſt pro-
" bable, was a great Queſtion; but which Opinion
" true, God only knows; and what they were cer-
" tain of, ſuch as Obligations of Virtue, and the

" Will

" Will of God in Matters of Morality, they were " never able to prove and explain clearly and diſ- " tinctly; They rather made them Matter of En- " tertainment, than proving the plain, neceſſary " and indiſpenſable Obligation of them: For as " they were not able to frame any regular conſiſtent " Scheme of Things, the Truths they taught were " ſingle and ſcattered, accidental as it were, and " hit upon by Chance, rather than by any Know- " ledge of the true State of Things; therefore " could never make out upon what Principle Vir- " tue was to be choſen, and perpetually diſagreed, " and contradicted one another upon that great " Queſtion, What was the chief Good, or final " Happineſs of Man. And thoſe things they " were able to prove, ſuch as the moſt obvious and " neceſſary Duties of Life, they had not Autho- " rity to enforce; becauſe they ſeemed to want " weight, and to be but the Precepts of Men; " And it has by Experience appeared to be alto- " gether impoſſible for Philoſophy and bare Reaſon " to reform Mankind effectually, without the Aſ- " ſiſtance of ſome higher Principle. That extra- " ordinary and ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, without " which the Philoſophers themſelves were ſenſible, " there could never be any truly great Man; and " therefore a divine Revelation was plainly want- " ing, and abſolutely neceſſary to recover Mankind " out of their univerſal Corruption and Degene- " racy; and their chief Lawgivers thought it not " a ſufficient Recommendation of their Laws, " that they were agreeable to the Light of Nature, " unleſs they pretended alſo that they received them " from God.

" The modern Deiſts therefore have much departed " from the Senſe of the ancient and wiſe Philoſophers, " in contending that there was no want, no need " of Revelation; that Philoſophy and right Rea-

" ſon

" ſon was of itſelf ſufficiently able to inſtruct and
" preſerve Men in the Practice of their Duty; and
" that nothing was to be expected from Revelation;
" for there are ſeveral Truths not poſſible to be
" diſcovered with any Certainty by the Light of
" Nature: and it is certain in fact, that the wiſeſt
" Philoſophers of old were never able to do it to
" any effectual Purpoſe. And as to the great Pre-
" tence of the modern Deiſts, it is to be obſerved,
" that the cleareſt of moral Reaſonings was much
" improved even in the Heathen Writers, after the
" Coming of Chriſt. And almoſt all things which
" are ſaid wiſely and truly by modern Deiſts, are
" plainly borrowed from that Revelation which
" they refuſe to embrace; and without which they
" never could have been able to have ſaid the ſame
" things. What ground have they to imagine,
" had they lived without the Light of the Goſpel,
" that they ſhould have been wiſer than *Socrates*,
" *Plato* and *Cicero*, or made ſuch right Uſe of their
" Reaſon, as to have diſcovered the Truth exactly,
" and not been involved in that Idolatry, which
" overſpread the whole World? 'Tis one thing
" to ſee, that thoſe Rules of Life, which are before
" hand plainly and particularly laid before us, are
" perfectly agreeable to Reaſon: And another
" thing to find out theſe Rules merely by the
" Light of Reaſon, without their having firſt been
" any otherwiſe made known. And after all, the
" Truth at the Bottom is plainly this: All the
" great things the modern Deiſts affect to ſay of
" right Reaſon, as to its Sufficiency in diſcovering
" the Obligations and Motives of Morality, is on-
" ly a Pretence to be made uſe of when they are
" oppoſing Chriſtianity. At other times and in
" reality, they have no hearty Regard for Mora-
" lity; and however their Creed may pretend to
" be the Creed of Deiſts, yet almoſt always their

" Prac-

" Practice is the Practice of Atheiſts: And their " Arguments againſt Revelation and Chriſtianity, " in their not being univerſally owned and em- " braced, and conſequently no real want of them, " or ground to think any farther Aſſiſtance neceſ- " ſary to enable Men to anſwer all the Ends of " their Creation, than the bare Light of Na- " ture, will hold equally good againſt natural Re- " ligion, that neither was that neceſſary to enable " Men to anſwer the Ends of their Creation; be- " cauſe 'tis evident all Men are not endued with " the ſame Faculties and Capacities, nor have " they all equally afforded to them the ſame Means " of making that Diſcovery: Many Nations being " now ignorant and barbarous, and conſequently " the Knowledge of Natural Religion being, in " fact, by no means univerſal; it will follow, that " there is no great Neceſſity even of that: But that " Men may do very well without it, in perform- " ing the Functions of animal Life, and directing " themſelves wholly by the Inclinations of Senſe; " and thus theſe Gentlemen muſt at laſt be forced " to let go all moral Obligations, and to recur " unavoidably to abſolute Atheiſm."

Can a more languid and deſponding Character be given than this of the Law of Nature? And are not all the Objections I offered, allowed by the ableſt Defenders of it? Is it not an Abuſe of Words and Common Senſe, to call ſuch a disjointed Heap of Fragments and Fable either a Religion or a Law? Here we ſee a whole World involved in Barbarity and Idolatry, the wiſeſt therein ignorant of their own final Happineſs, or God's Dealings with them, their whole Attempts to diſcover the Truth of Things vain and fruitleſs, their natural Underſtanding unqualified to find out or apprehend even the Being of a God, the Immortality of the Soul, *&c.* not able to prove the Obligations of

Morality, nor ſhew upon what Principles Virtue was to be choſen. The Truths they taught were ſcattered and disjointed Fragments, hit upon by Chance, not acquired by Knowledge; for they underſtood them not, neither ſaw their Connexion, nor could aſſign the Reaſons of them; they had not Authority to enforce the moſt familiar or neceſſary Duties of Life; for they taught them as the Precepts of Men, but diſcerned not their Derivation nor Dependence on the Will of God: And on theſe Accounts they could not, without the Aſſiſtance of an higher Principle, either reform themſelves or inſtruct others. The whole of Religion conſiſts in teaching the End of Man, with the Means to attain it: But Nature never taught Man wherein his final Good conſiſted; and it is an Obſervation of *Cicero, Acad. Q. l.* 1. *de Fin. l.* 5. "that they who do "not agree in ſtating what is the chief End or "Good, muſt of courſe differ in the whole Syſtem "of Precepts for the Conduct of Life."

How could Nature and Reaſon then (unable to conclude one Principle, or infer one Duty) be ſufficient Guides to Happineſs and God? How could the Author of Nature intend them for ſuch Purpoſes? Or what can we believe of a Subject which the greateſt of Men pull down with one hand, as faſt as they build up with the other? but that it is dim, wavering, and uncertain, and ſomething elſe plainly wanting, and abſolutely neceſſary to direct Mankind, and influence them in the Practice of Duty? This is the Sum of all the Arguments in favour of Natural Religion: God gave Man Reaſon to diſcover a Rule and Law, but Reaſon never did it, or to no purpoſe. What is the Conſequence, but that an ineffective Cauſe was the Appointment of infinite Power and Wiſdom; and that Reaſon had a divine Commiſſion to diſcharge, which it ne-

ver did, or could faithfully execute. Both which are impious and abſurd.

But if Reaſon ever did, or poſſibly could perform the Miracles aſcribed to it, there is another Difficulty occurs, without a full Solution to which the whole Superſtructure vaniſhes into nothing: And that is, how the Dictates of mere Reaſon can obtain the Force of a Law, or have ſuch an obligatory Power as to ſubject us to Rewards or Puniſhments? And this can only be inferred from the Authority whence Law ariſes; for the Effect cannot have more Power or Dominion than the Cauſe.

And I would thus define Law: That it is a Rule of Life (Νόμος φῶς ὁδοῦ) directing us by proper Means to the beſt Ends, and arm'd with Puniſhments for the Diſobedient, and Rewards for the Obedient. For that cannot be Law which does not direct what is beſt, nor a Rule that does not point out proper Means to attain the End, nor obligatory without a Power to enforce it. And Law may be divided into Human, Natural, and Divine.

Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. p. 356.

As to Inſtitutions purely human, they may more properly be called Agreements than Laws, as being deficient in the End, Means, and Sanction. They were the Invention of latter Ages, after Men form'd themſelves into Societies, and began to traffick, and were calculated purely to be ſubſervient to theſe Ends. All Commerce at firſt was by Exchange of Goods, Cattle, and other Neceſſaries one with another; there was neither Law nor Money to regulate the Price of things, but every one made the beſt Bargain he could. When Coin was introduced as a kind of common Meaſure to adjuſt the Inequality of Value, it was from Compact or Law, not from Nature, and therefore called *Nummus* (from νόμος) Law, and ſtamped with the Impreſſion of Cattle; and the Mulct preſcribed by the ancient Laws was a Forfeiture of Cattle among the *Romans*,

Romans, and, according to *Strabo*, among the *Luſitanians* and *Albanians*. Such were the Beginnings of Law, and it has been remarked that *Homer* does not once uſe the Word νόμος. When ſingle Perſons preſcribed Rules to Communities, they were called *Lawgivers*. Some made *Ceres* the Inventor of Laws, whence *Virgil* ſtiles her *Legifera*; yet moſt were of a far later Date. Æneid. 4.

But the Queſtion is, how Laws purely human can carry with them an Obligation, which is as it were the Soul of all Law? By Nature all Men are equal, nor has any one a Right to put Reſtraint upon the Body or Mind of another: Servitude has always been looked upon as preternatural. *Servitus eſt conſtitutio juris gentium, qua quis domino alieno contra naturam ſubjicitur*, a Subjection to a ſtrange Maſter contrary to the Order of Nature. So *Ariſtotle*, that to exerciſe ſuch a Power, is παρὰ φύσιν τὸ δεσπόζειν, *to domineer contrary to Nature*. And St. *Ambroſe* will have it, that Drunkenneſs introduced Slavery, before which Liberty was inviolable; It never enter'd into the Thought of any Mortal to condemn to Slavery one Partaker of the ſame Nature with himſelf, nor was any Man ſo unreaſonable and mad as to give up himſelf to obey the arbitrary Will of another. By Nature there is no Difference or Inequality, and he that is his own Maſter cannot be ruled or controul'd by another: Slavery is no more than a Subjection to Laws which we neither make nor conſent to; and ſuch a State whether entred on by Conſent or Violence, being unnatural, carries no natural Obligation with it. Polit. 1.

Secondly, As to *Natural Law*, there have been as various Opinions in deriving, as in defining or deſcribing it.

1. Some have attempted to prove that certain Rights are natural to Men, becauſe practiſed by other Animals, as Self-Preſervation, and that of

their Species, by Beaſts; Society and an orderly Commonwealth by Bees; Marriage and conjugal Amity by Doves, *&c.* And therefore they define the Natural Law to be in common to Beaſts, Birds, and Fiſh, as well as Men. *Jus naturale eſſe quod Natura omnia animalia docuit, atque jus iſtud non humani generis eſſe proprium, ſed omnium animalium quæ in terra, quæ in mari naſcuntur, avium quoque commune eſſe.* But theſe Acts of Brutes, tho' ſometimes called Laws, as of Birds by *Ariſtophanes*, ὀρνίθων νόμες, yet very improperly, as the Subject of Law muſt be Good and Evil, and Inſtincts are not capable of Guidance or Direction, as Paſſions are: Thoſe natural Propenſions of Brutes are their Rights, becauſe from Nature; but are no more Law than the Actions or Motions of Vegetables, Trees, or other natural Bodies.

L. 1. D. de Juſt. & Jure, & Inſt. de Jure Nat.

In Avibus.

Even in Men theſe involuntary Propenſions or Sallies are not the Effect of Reaſon, but a kind of natural Senſibility born with us, for which we are not able to account. If we ſee a Child falling into the Fire, our Heart is that moment touched, and we fly to help him; It is no Reflexion that determines us to this, or Thoughts of receiving Thanks from his Parents, but we act by a Motion purely natural. Here is no Time to deliberate, no Concurrence of the Judgment or Will, and an Action incapable of Reaſon and Choice cannot be ſubject to Law.

2*ly*. Some derive Natural Law from the Cuſtoms of Nations; but none of theſe were univerſal, therefore could not be the Law of Nature: For what is truly ſuch, muſt have an unalterable Force and Obligation in all Places and Ages, as Fire has to burn, or Water to flow; the ὁ κοινὸς νόμος Common Law of Nature is an univerſal Judgment, therefore unchangeable: Cuſtoms are particular Opinions; and what perpetually varies, *Proteus*-like, cannot

cannot be a Law. Beſides, Law muſt be Truth, for Falſhood cannot oblige, and Truth is always the ſame. Good and Evil alter not with Law and Cuſtom, nor have any Dependence on them. Inceſt with Siſters was cuſtomary in *Greece*, and allow'd by the Laws of *Solon* and *Lycurgus*; in After-ages it was diſuſed and condemned. So *Simplicius* ſays it is now forbidden both by Law and Cuſtom; neither the Permiſſion nor Reſtraint therefore were from Nature. And as the Cuſtoms or Manners of a Country, *i. e.* the Conſent of thoſe who conform themſelves to them, cannot make what is evil good; ſo neither can they ſuperinduce an Obligation, becauſe what is wicked would then ſometimes oblige; and the ſame thing be of Force in one Age, not in another, oblige at *Athens*, not at *Rome*, &c. which is unnatural.

In Epict. c. 47.

We ſhould have been better able to judge of the Religion of Nature from this Head, if ſeveral Works of the Ancients had been preſerved; as the Νόμιμα Βαρβαρικὰ of *Ariſtotle*, or *The Manners and Inſtitutes of Barbarians*, i. e. of the Nations who lived out of *Greece*; his Books of the different Polities, Civil Rites, and Morals of People; their Laws by *Theophraſtus*, &c. But by what Remains we have, we may ſafely judge that never any thing was more truly ſpoke than that proverbial Expreſſion among them: *Nec Natura poteſt juſto ſecernere iniquum.*

If it be ſaid, that notwithſtanding a Difference of Manners among Nations, yet nevertheleſs they agreed in the fundamental Points of all Religion, ſuch as the Belief of the true God, a proper Acknowledgment and Worſhip of him, *&c.* I would only at preſent ask, where was this Religion or Law of Nature in *Greece* before *Cecrops?* For he was the firſt who told them there was ſuch a Perſon as *Jupiter*, invoked him, offer'd Sacrifices, built Altars, or made Images among them. Before him no one

knew, or had ſo much as heard of theſe Things. *Plato* acknowledges the ſame thing, that they had no Gods but the Sun, Moon and Stars, *i. e.* the viſible Syſtem. So that the Religion of *Greece* was without a God, without Worſhip; their Law of Nature without End, Means, Motives, or Obligation. And this was not peculiar to *Greece*, the Catholick Religion of the World was Atheiſtical Idolatry; their Manners Turpitude and Barbarity. And theſe only were entitled to the Appellations of Natural and Univerſal.

3*ly*. Some derive it from natural Reaſon, and the right Uſe of it among Men. And it is no wonder that the Heathen being ignorant of God, and the Method of coming at divine Truths, attributed many of them to Reaſon, as finding it in the Poſſeſſion of them, and not knowing what other Original to aſcribe them to. Yet notwithſtanding the many great things they ſay of Nature, or Philoſophy's being a ſufficient Guide to Virtue, yet the wiſeſt of them meant it not excluſively of the divine Aſſiſtance. So *Cicero*. *Multos & noſtra civitas & Græcia tulit ſingulares viros, quorum neminem, niſi juvante Deo, talem fuiſſe credendum eſt— Nemo igitur vir magnus ſine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit*; and *Max. Tyr.* Διονλαι ξυναγωνιςᾶ Θεᾶ ϗ ξυλλήπλορος, &c. *That Perſons of the beſt Diſpoſitions ſtand in need of the Aſſiſtance and Help of God to lead and impel them*, &c. And therefore in this Senſe we muſt underſtand many of their Expreſſions, *Nec eſt quiſquam gentis ullius qui ducem naturam nactus ad virtutem pervenire non poteſt*, &c.

Nat. D. l. 2. n. 124, 125.

Diſſert. 22. p. 265.

Cic. leg. 1. n. 3.

But as to the Uſe and Rule of natural or right Reaſon among Men; it is commonly aſſerted, that there are ſuch common Notions and Apprehenſions implanted in them, whereby every one finds an inward fixed Conviction and Determination, that Good is deſirable, Evil to be avoided, that we ought

ought to live in a becoming manner, &c. From which Notions or Principles, a Mind not depraved, by its own rational Faculties forms Propoſitions, and Concluſions as certain as the Principles themſelves. Therefore natural Law is often defined with *Ariſtotle*, πανταχοῦ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, καὶ οὐ τῷ δοκεῖν ἢ μὴ, *quod ubique eandem vim obtinet, & non quia ita videtur vel minime*, *i. e.* what does not depend upon the various and uncertain Uſe of Opinions among Men or Nations, or on poſitive Laws contrived for the publick Good of Society; but on the conſtant and invariable Determination of thoſe who act by right and ſound Reaſon. So *Cicero*: *Lex eſt recta ratio imperandi*, &c. The Law is right Reaſon, commanding or forbidding, and whoever is ignorant of it, whether it be any where written or not, is an unjuſt Perſon; and a little after, *Nos legem bonam à mala nulla alia niſi naturali norma dividere poſſumus*, &c. We cannot diſtinguiſh a good Law from a bad one by any other than a natural Rule. For not only Right and Wrong are diſcerned by Nature, but all virtuous and vitious Things: For common Reaſon, that which is coeval with our Minds, makes theſe things known to us; that what is honeſt and laudable ſhould be accounted Virtuous, what is baſe Vitious. And it is Madneſs to think they are owing to Opinion, not to Nature. Many Paſſages are to be met with in *Cicero*, *Plato*, *Plutarch*, *Seneca*, and other Philoſophers, as alſo among Civilians and Theologiſts, which will have the Laws of Nature to be placed in, or pointed out by, the right Uſe of Reaſon: That there are certain firſt Principles, from which many Corollaries or Deductions may neceſſarily be inferred, and the Law of Nature explicitly drawn and eſtabliſhed. As in the Mathematicks, there are ſome Axioms, which every attentive Mind muſt

Ethic. l. 5. c. 10.

Leg. 1.

at firſt Sight acknowledge to be true, and from them other Propoſitions equally true may be concluded. So in moral Enquiries, after allowing ſome Principles, which muſt be univerſally and unavoidably true, ſuch as Self-preſervation, the Uſe of Things neceſſary for Life, the Conjunction of Sexes, Propagation of our Species, and other things uſually called Good and Honeſt; there will ariſe from right Reaſon certain Commands and Prohibitions univerſally binding, by which that Good may be preſerved, and the Contrary hindred. And conclude, that as Nature has abundantly provided for all other Caſes and Wants, ſo eſpecially muſt it in this, by ſuggeſting whatever can inſtruct or enable us to lead our Lives becomingly, juſtly, and religiouſly. That ſome things are by Nature indifferent, neither required nor forbidden, in which Men are left at liberty to determine for themſelves, as they ſhall judge moſt convenient, according to the Variety of Circumſtances that may attend them. But there are other things ſo expreſly commanded or prohibited by Nature, that no Diſpenſation therein can at any time be allowable; and that Man may thus by the Uſe of right Reaſon learn the exact Boundaries of Vice and Virtue, by the ſame Rule that he knows what is good and honeſt.

To judge rightly in this Caſe, we muſt conſider that Reaſon and its Uſe are taken in two Senſes: Either ſimply or without regard to the Authority and Declaration of any ſuperior Being; or as it acknowledges ſuch a Power, marking out the Bounds of Duty to us, declaring what is Good, and what is Evil. The firſt only is at preſent to be conſidered, and theſe two Remarks will I think follow from it: That the Uſe of Reaſon in Men is neither ſo certain nor conſiſtent in the Diſcernment of theſe things, that what is beſt and moſt

deſirable

deſirable can always appear from it. Or were it never ſo regular and conſtant, yet no legal Cauſe of Obligation could be thence inferred.

As to the Uncertainty which the free Uſe of Reaſon always laboured under in theſe Inquiries (to omit the Vulgar who may be always Strangers to it) it will appear both in the Origin and Subject of Natural Law; their wiſeſt Men diſagreeing in nothing more than whence proceeded the eſſential Difference of Good and Evil. *Archelaus*, the Maſter of *Socrates*, taught that things were juſt and unjuſt, not by Nature, but by Law. *Plato* tells us, Diog. Laert. p. 99. Euſeb. Præp. l. 12. c. 50. p. 622.
"That in his Days the commonly received Opini-
"on concerning Laws, was, that they were poſi-
"tive, not from Nature but Appointment; that
"the Gods themſelves exiſted in their preſent Or-
"der, not by Nature, but from Determinations
"and Agreements of their own. That of good
"Things ſome were ſuch by Nature, others by
"Law. But as for juſt Things there are none ſuch
"by Nature, for that Men perpetually differed in
"Opinion about them, and were ſubſtituting new
"ones: But whenever they were appointed to be
"ſuch, they became juſt from Law, and artificial
"Compact, not from Nature." When *Alcibiades* asked *Pericles* what was Law? He anſwered, "What Xenophon. Mem. Soc. l. 1. p. 18.
"the People ordain in a general Aſſembly, decla-
"ring what ought, and what ought not to be done."
When he inquired again, "Whether they ordained
"what was Good or Evil, he replied, moſt cer-
"tainly what is Good:" and poſitively declared,
"That whatever is the Ordinance of a legal Govern-
"ment, is Law, and conſequently right." *Ari-* Diog. Laert. 4.
ſtippus taught, "That nothing was juſt, or honeſt,
"or baſe by Nature, but only from Cuſtom and
"Law; and that a wiſe Man might ſteal, or
"commit Adultery, or Sacrilege, when it was op-
"portune, for none of theſe things were naturally
"vile,

" vile, and he need not reſtrain himſelf becauſe of " the Opinion of a fooliſh unskilful Multitude." The Doctrine of *Diogenes* was to the ſame purpoſe; and *Pyrrho* denied, " That any thing was in itſelf " baſe or commendable, juſt or unjuſt; but that " Men did all things by Law and Cuſtom, for
Id. p 411. " one thing was not better than another." This
Id. p. 669. Determination of Good and Evil entered alſo into the moſt ſacred Parts of their Religion. It was the
Xenoph. great Rule of *Socrates*, " To adhere ſtrictly to the
Id. p. 25. " Cuſtoms of his Country, and that to deviate " from them was a Token of Superſtition and " Vanity."

As to their Ethics, no one can be ignorant that the Diſputes concerning Good and Evil, were numberleſs among the Profeſſors of right Reaſon, the Lawgivers, Prieſts, and Philoſophers; nor was there any to compoſe or reconcile theſe Diſſenſions; ſo many Sects were there, and ſuch a fruitful Harveſt of Opinions, that in Philoſophy, and that grounded on the ſtricteſt Reaſon, according to the utmoſt Abilities and Wit of thoſe who ſearched into it, there were no leſs, as *Varro* obſerved, than Two hundred eighty eight different Sentiments about the *ſummum bonum*, or the final Happineſs and End of Man; and conſequently ſo many Religions, Laws, Means, and Motives among them.

They alſo who moſt profeſſedly inquired into the univerſal Principles of living well, fell into ſeparate Opinions and Schemes, each judging his own beſt, and condemning every other. Nay, ſo ſingular was Reaſon among Philoſophers of the higheſt Claſs, that many things generally deemed to be contrary to the Law of Nature, they dared to aſſert were abſolutely permitted and allowed by it. *Zeno*, *Chryſippus*, and the *Perſian Magi* held it lawful to lie with their Mothers, their Daughters, or with Men. Theft, Sacrilege, and Adultery were held lawful

lawful by *Theodorus*. All manner of beaſtly Luſt by *Diogenes*; and *Plato* the divineſt of them all, allowed an almoſt promiſcuous Copulation, and would have Wives and all other things in common, as if the Law required it. *Archelaus*, *Ariſtippus*, and *Carneades* would not have any thing to be naturally juſt, but that whatever was eſteemed ſo, depended wholly on the Will and Appointment of Men. Numberleſs other Inſtances to this Purpoſe are to be every where met with in the Writings of the Ancients. Every one loudly affirms ὁ νόμος ἐστὶ λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς, Right Reaſon is the Law, yet ſo vaſtly differ in what Right Reaſon is. Even when they ſeem to agree in the Fundamentals on which Laws were founded; when they come to interpret or apply them, they divide into many and contrary Opinions. "When any one, ſays *Socrates*, men- In Phædro.
"tions Silver or Iron, we all underſtand the ſame
"thing by it; but when they ſpeak of what is
"Juſt or Good, they think in a different manner,
"and diſagree with themſelves as well as others."

Some, as the *Pyrrhoniſts*, *Scepticks*, and others, thought every thing ſo doubtful, and the Reaſons on both Sides the Queſtion ſo equal, that they ſuſpended their Aſſent, and concluded that Truth was no where to be found; ſo riveted were they to this Perſuaſion, that they would not believe common Notions any more than others.

On the whole it appears that great Caution muſt be uſed, that we do not too freely rely on the Diſquiſitions of Reaſon, which are ſo various and uncertain, that what one takes for a ſelf-evident Principle, or inconteſtable Concluſion, frequently appears to another equally ſagacious, as doubtful or falſe, and to be abſolutely rejected. That this often happened to thoſe maſterly Underſtandings of old, who argued with a free and unreſtrained Uſe of Reaſon, concerning the Nature of Good and Evil,

Evil, Honeſt and Diſhoneſt, every one is convinced of who has but looked into their Writings. And the infinite variety of Sects and Schools, with the bitter Animoſities that always ſubſiſted among them, may ſufficiently convince us, that their Laws ſprang from Opinion, not from Nature.

But if Reaſon had been never ſo conſonant in her Deciſions, the Difficulty ſtill occurs, how they would obtain the Force of a Law, or carry an Obligation with them.

Men may be here conſidered as ſeparate Individuals, or as formed into Societies; under the firſt, which was the State of Mankind for many Ages after the Diſperſion, they were in every reſpect by Nature and Condition equal, without Settlement, Society, Polity, or Law. The Fact could not be otherwiſe than as repreſented by the Ancients: That there was a time when Men wandered about the Fields like Beaſts, ſuſtained Life in a wild ſavage manner, and in their Actions never conſulted Reaſon or Judgment, but only Violence and Strength of Body; Religion and common Notions were then every where much the ſame, as they now are at the *Cape of Good Hope*, or in *New Guinea*. But let it be ſuppoſed that from a more diligent Uſe of mere Reaſon, without any regard to the Authority of a Superior, they were gradually brought to lay aſide this wild kind of Life, and agreed (but ſtill preſerving their Equality) to regulate themſelves for the future by certain Articles and Laws, which they called Natural; yet what has this to do with what in any Propriety can be called either Duty or Obligation? Or if a few among them by a peculiar Strength of Mind, and long Obſervation, had hit upon ſome Univerſal Truths, yet they could not influence others who were at perfect Liberty to receive and believe them or not. Becauſe no one has a Right to impoſe his Sentiments or Scheme upon

Plato Repub. 2. Cic. de Invent. 1. Laert. l. 5, &c.

upon another; or if they all became Philoſophers, the Caſe would have been ſtill worſe, it being plain they never could or did agree in any Syſtem of Truth or Law. And no one had more Authority than another to determine who was in the right, and who in the wrong; or, what is the utmoſt that can be ſuppoſed, had they all concurred in the ſame way of thinking, in the Definitions of Right and Wrong, and particularly ſpecifying what was reducible under thoſe Heads, ſo as they abſolutely judged it to be natural, without any Doubt or Controverſy remaining concerning it, yet the Caſe had been ſtill the ſame: For no Collections or Inferences by the bare Exerciſe of Reaſon, without any manifeſt Authority to guide it, could carry a legal Obligation with them. Mere naked Reaſon, as ſuch, can only declare and perſuade, but not command to the diſcharge of any Duty, except armed with the Authority of ſome Superior to him who is commanded, which is ſo eſſential a Property to every given Law, that it cannot ſubſiſt without it. And that any, or even one of theſe Men, perfectly equal, can be ſo obliged or commanded by the Reaſon of others, or their own (though none can command or prohibit themſelves) or of all the reſt, that he cannot alter his Opinion, or change it into the contrary, can be no more granted, than that all the reſt ſhould ſtand obliged by his ſingle Opinion; for whence can proceed this Diſparity in the Cauſe of Obligation, where all, as has been ſaid, are equal, and not yet formed into a regular Society? The only Pretence for receiving a Doctrine, is, that it is true and agreeable to Reaſon, and on the ſame Account another may oppoſe or reject it, becauſe it does not appear ſo in his Judgment; and neither one nor the other has a Right to Submiſſion, becauſe in this Caſe their Power

Power is equal, neither of them having the Sanction of a Superior Authority.

But let us ſuppoſe theſe very Perſons, by mutual Conſent to have united into a Body, and agreed not only on a common Rule of Life, but of Government alſo: So that now amongſt them Princes are ſuperior to Subjects, Laws formed by mere Reaſon, and Puniſhments enacted for Offenders. Yet, if ſome higher Right and Authority be not added, a Power ſuperior to any Reaſon of the particular Members, by which Promiſes thus entred on can be preſerved, by which Princes are to be obeyed, Compacts to be obſerved, and by which all collectively can be bound with ſtronger Fetters than the Opinion of Individuals, or vague Reaſon: How can it happen that any Obligation conſented to by a private Perſon, may not, on the altering of his Judgment, be naturally and at will diſſolved? Or what can, or ought to prevent his withdrawing at pleaſure from ſuch Promiſe, Government, Compact, or Appointment of Puniſhments, in which they had conſented? He commits no Sin in this, therefore cannot be obliged to the contrary. For as an Equal can have no Rule over an Equal, ſo neither can they who were once Equals, from any Law mutually agreed on, or the Name of Duty grounded on ſuch Agreement, be rendred ſo unequal, that every one cannot have the Liberty to renounce the Society into which he entred, or the Law to which he conſented, unleſs ſome extrinſecal Obligation, different from themſelves, confirm thoſe Conceſſions and Duties they have entred into. Without this Men can never be reſtrained or kept within Bounds, it being evident, that whatever Obligation, or on whatever account, Men lay themſelves under, they can legally diſſolve the ſame, except ſome Authority ſuperior to Man require them to continue ſo obliged.

obliged. And it is as impoſſible to be otherwiſe, as that equal Numbers, without an external Addition or Subſtraction, ſhould become unequal. And hence in the Doctrine of the ancient Heathens, the Gods themſelves were not obliged to the Obſervance of a voluntary Promiſe, without ſwearing to it by the River *Styx*, and the Name of a ſuperior Deity.

Dii cujus jurare timent & fallere numen. Virg.

4*ly*. Others derive the Law of Nature, or the Univerſal Law, from the Authority and Appointment only of the Author of Nature. The Law is that, which from the Creation of Nature and Things has been common to, and required of all Men: And what from the Beginning has been ſhewn and commanded to all Human Kind, could neither take its Riſe, nor have Authority from any other than the great and holy Author of their Beings: His Power alone could reſtrain their Liberty, induce an Obligation, or rightfully puniſh the Violators of it.

Without Law Man muſt be in a State of Liberty, & *libertati proprium eſt, ſic vivere ut velis*, "the very "Notion of Liberty is, to live as we liſt." Nor can any thing reſtrain us, but Violence or Law; with the former we have nothing to do. And Law is a juſt Rule of Acting, whereby our Freedom is withheld to do nothing but what that directs, and avoid every thing which that forbids, in Obedience and Duty to the Will of him who has a juſt Right and Authority to command it. From hence proceeds the Obligation, or that Bond of Law whereby we are neceſſarily engaged to the Obſervance or Omiſſion of any thing: So that as by the Law itſelf there is occaſioned a Difference of Good and Evil, in Things or Actions, from the Commands or Prohibitions of the Law; ſo hence ariſes an Obligation or Duty to perform ſome Office, which is the firſt Re- Cic. de Off. L. 1.

Relation between us and Law: And to ſuch Obligation neceſſarily adheres a Subjection to Puniſhment on the Violation of it; for Law is a reſtraining the Power of doing what we liſt; but Law, without a Power to puniſh, cannot induce ſuch Reſtraint: Therefore all Offenders muſt be under an Obligation to Puniſhment, by the ſame Neceſſity that they are ſubject to Law; as the undergoing Puniſhment, whether ſatisfactory, purgative, or expiatory, is nothing but the Retribution, Releaſe, or Diſcharge appointed or required by the Law. None of which things could poſſibly be, were not Law an Injunction of a ſuperior Power.

Thus in all well-regulated Polities, the Wiſdom of the Legiſlature appears, in forming Laws ſuitable to the Exigences of Time and Place, ſo as they may beſt tend to the Happineſs and Security of the People: Yet the Obligation to obey ſuch Laws ariſes not from their intrinſick Goodneſs or Expediency, but from the rightful Power of the Enactors.

Conformably to this, in the great Commonwealth of the World, where all things are directed to their beſt Ends, by the Counſel of an Eternal Mind; his Decrees muſt be ſuch as his Will is, and his Will as his Nature, that is, infinitely perfect. By unerring Juſtice they are fitted to the Capacities of thoſe who are to obſerve them, and by unconfined Goodneſs framed for their Advantage and Happineſs: And whichever way the Laws of God are communicated to us, we obey them not for their own ſakes, but becauſe they are his Will, whoſe Right to Obedience is prior to any other Conſideration. And notwithſtanding the many Prejudices conceived againſt it, it always has been, and will be the ſoundeſt Rule in Divinity, that the Wickedneſs of an Action conſiſts in its being forbidden by God, without Regard had to the Diſtinction of Natural or Poſitive Laws.

For nothing can poſſibly be a Law, but the Will of one who has a juſt Right and Authority to demand Subjection, with Power to enforce it; another may give his Advice, but cannot direct, nor without Violence compel. And wherever there is Subjection, it muſt be to a Superior, for nothing can be ſubject to itſelf; and as nothing is ſuperior to Man but God, therefore the End of all Law, obligatory to Man, is to bring him into Subjection to the Will of God. This Will alone can determine his Reaſon, bind his Judgment, and direct him, by proper Means, to his final End; which End alſo being ſupernatural, is not from Nature, but from God.

Again: Man, as a Creature, is dependent; for Independence is the Prerogative of the Creator; and if dependent, ſubordinate; if ſubordinate, in a Rank below one or more Cauſes, the Supreme of which muſt be ſuperior in Dignity, and have Juriſdiction and Authority over all: For every Second Cauſe owes its Being to, and is abſolutely dependent in Nature and Operations on the precedent One, as all are on the Supreme; it being eſſential to a Firſt Cauſe to be Independent, Self-being, and Self-ſufficient, in which all Exiſtence and Power are originally lodged, and from which all others derive, and depend upon for, both Being and Sufficiency: Therefore to be ſubject and dependent, is eſſential to a Created Being, the Virtue of an inferior Agent being only an Emanation of Virtue from a ſuperior one. And all Subjection requires Obedience, it being the Law of ſubordinate Natures to obey, according to the Sphere of their Activity, the Will of the Firſt; which having abſolute Dominion, founded on Omnipotence and Supremacy, has a Right to abſolute Obedience: And conſequently, all ſecond limited Cauſes and Beings muſt be obnoxious

to his ſovereign Pleaſure: Such is their Nature, and therefore the Law and Perfection of it.

This is the great Relation betwixt Creator and Creature, Abſolute Dominion and Abſolute Subjection; and as no Creature can be made exempt from the former, ſo it never can be exempted from the latter. And this is the Foundation of all Law and Obedience, to be ſubject to the Pleaſure of another, who has an abſolute Diſpoſal of thoſe under his Dominion. Dominion on one hand, and Subjection on the other, are included in the very Notion and Eſſence of Law. Therefore among Individuals, where there is a perfect Equality, there can be neither Dependence, Subjection, nor Law: No created Being can give Law to itſelf, any more than it can be the Cauſe of itſelf, but muſt receive it from that Cauſe which gave it Being and Operation. Dependence is eſſential to a Creature, and Law is the Rule of that Dependence or Obedience: And there is no Authority in Law, but what proceeds from the Declaration of ſuch ſovereign Will and Pleaſure.

The ſame Argument will equally hold good as to the other moſt eſſential Part of Law, the Sanctions of Rewards and Puniſhments, which are the Support of all Government both in Heaven and Earth. Hence *Macrobius* ſays of the Heathens, "That becauſe all Laws are imperfect which have "not Puniſhments annexed, this made them con- "demn all Violators of them to *Tartarus*, where they "ſhould undergo Torments for many Ages, before "they ſufficiently expiated their Crimes, and fi- "niſhed the due Purgation." And *Grotius*, *In legibus ſanctio dicitur ea pars, quæ ſanguinem delinquentis legi conſecrat*: "In Laws, that Part is called Sanc- "tion, which conſecrates the Blood of the Delin- "quent to the Law." So that a Lawgiver muſt be one who when he wills and commands, wills Puniſhments

In Somn. Scip. l. 2. ult.

niſhments alſo ; without which Law would be no more than a Petition or Intreaty, and Obedience a voluntary Compliance, which every one might offer or refuſe at pleaſure, being finally accountable to none but themſelves: Becauſe there is no enforcing Principle, except Reaſon could oblige or compel itſelf, *i. e.* at the ſame time be Cauſe and Effect, be Dependent and Independent, Superior and Inferior, which are manifeſt Contradictions. Such Principle therefore muſt be extrinſick to the Mind, becauſe nothing can reſtrain a natural Liberty, but a ſuperior Authority, nor judicially puniſh Offenders, but a legal uncontrolable Power: And over Man there is no ſuch Power, but of God. For to puniſh without a Right to do it, is Injuſtice, Tyranny, and Cruelty ; and where there is no Superior, there is no Difference or Authority, neither Law, Subjection, nor Bond of Obligation (every one is a Rule to himſelf) and conſequently neither Rewards nor Puniſhments.

And yet we have ſeen, that in the *Gentile* World (notwithſtanding the Name of a *Tartarus*) the Truth of final Rewards and Puniſhments was ſo far called in Queſtion, that ſome wholly exploded them as a Dream of the Poets. They were rendred to all doubtful and uncertain by the Diſputations of the wiſeſt Philoſophers that ever lived ; and they who did believe them, had ſuch obſcure Notions of their Nature, mixed with ſuch fabulous Fictions and Stories, that they had no Force to influence the Actions or the Lives of Men: And conſequently the Religion of Nature wanted the moſt eſſential Part, the ſtrongeſt Tie and Bond it could have on the Minds of Rational Creatures ; for not only the Foundation of all Religion, but the moſt weighty Motives to Obedience, are the Exiſtence of God, that he is a Rewarder and Puniſher of Men, and that the Soul is immortal. All Obligation to Obedience neceſ-

ſarily ſuppoſing the Exiſtence of ſuch a Being as hath Power to command us; and the Motives engaging Men to the Practice of Religion, muſt ſuppoſe the Certainty of a future State, and our ſubſiſting in it. As where Men have no Motives to induce them either to do or avoid a thing, they can have no juſt Ground or Reaſon either for doing or avoiding it, it is perfectly indifferent, nor ought Guilt to be charged, or Puniſhment inflicted on them.

Mr. *Locke* acknowledges the Truth of this Argument. "Thoſe juſt Meaſures (*ſays he*) of Right "and Wrong, which Neceſſity had any where introduced, the Civil Laws preſcribed, or Philoſophy recommended, ſtood not on their true "Foundations. They were looked upon as the "Bonds of Society and Conveniences of common "Life, and laudable Practices. But where was it "that their Obligation was thoroughly known and "allowed, and they received as Precepts of a Law, "of the higheſt Law, the Law of Nature? that "could not be without a clear Knowledge and Acknowledgment of the Law-maker, and the great "Rewards and Puniſhments for thoſe that would or "would not obey them."

Reaſo rab. of Chriſtianity, p. 275.

Thus in every Branch of Religion or Law, we muſt aſcend to a Firſt Mover; they are neither of them innate or ſelf-originated, therefore ſubordinate: And all Dependencies muſt be traced up, and ultimately referred to ſome neceſſary Being, who has Univerſal Empire and Dominion.

All the Diſtinctions of Good and Evil, as to Man, refer to ſome Principle above himſelf; for were there no Supreme Governor and Judge to reward Good and puniſh Evil, the very Notions of Good and Evil would vaniſh away: They could not exiſt in the Minds of Men, if there were not a Supreme Director to give Laws for the Meaſure thereof; for it is from having the Will of a Supreme Law-maker

for

for our Rule, that we call an Action good or evil, Sin or Duty, as 'tis commanded or forbidden by him. This even *Ariſtotle* could determine, "That "the Will of a Law-giver is ſuch, that they who "act not according to it, ſin." And a greater than he ſays, *But for the Law I had not known Sin.* Tho' by Natural Reaſon, or the Cuſtoms of the World, he had diſliked many Actions; yet till the Law declared it, he could not call any thing a Sin. And if St. *Paul* could not, neither could the *Gentiles.* Nature could not inſtruct him in the Differences of Good and Evil; for it is only by comparing Actions with the Law, that Men can pronounce them to be Duties or Sins. So again Mr. *Locke:* Ethic. L. 2. c. 1.

"If I have the Will of a ſupreme inviſible Law-maker for my Rule, then, as I ſuppoſe the Action commanded or forbidden by God, I call it Good or Evil, Sin or Duty; it being their Conformity to, or Diſagreement with ſome Rule, that makes them to be regular or irregular, good or bad. Thus Duelling, when conſidered in Relation to the Law of God, will deſerve the Name of Sin; to the Law of Faſhion in ſome Countries, Valour and Virtue; and to the Municipal Laws of ſome Governments, a Capital Crime." Eſſay H. Underſt. L. 2. c. 28. § 14, 15.

Nor would Rewards or Puniſhments be effectual Sanctions of Law, if they were not diſtributed by a righteous and omnipotent Judge. No one trembles or fears but from the Apprehenſions of a Deity; for the Law of Man cannot reach the inward Mind and Soul, as having no Dominion over them; nor is armed with Authority to take a final Vengeance. The Puniſhment of human Laws may be undergone without Shame or Terror: It muſt be ſomething greater than Man, that can arreſt the Conſcience, and fill it with Convulſions at the Dread of never-ceaſing Miſery, and falling into the Hands of the Living God, who ſhall paſs Judgment upon all

Men according to their Works. For this Reaſon, ſays *Lactantius*, *L.* 3. *c.* 27. "the Precepts of the "Philoſophers, tho' many of them were right, had "no weight, becauſe they were human, and want-"ed a divine Sanction."

Nor could there be any ſuch thing as a Moral Action, without ſuppoſing a Law from the Supreme Being; "Morally Good or Evil being only the Con-"formity or Diſagreement of our voluntary Acti-"ons to ſome Law, whereby Good or Evil is drawn "upon us from the Will and Power of the Law-"maker." Moral Good is when, notwithſtanding the Liberty of our Will, yet having a free Principle within us of determining our Actions upon proper Motives, we chooſe to govern ourſelves, and act by the Rule given us, when we were at liberty to have done otherwiſe: For the only End of Liberty is to make us capable of Laws (which they are not, who are under Compulſion or Natural Neceſſity) and in conſequence of them, of Rewards and Puniſhments. Without theſe, Liberty and Choice were good for nothing, and without regard to a Law, have neither Uſe nor Purpoſe. This different Manner of Approach to God diſtinguiſhes us from Beaſts, who being determined by mere Inſtinct, are not capable of Choice, and therefore not of having a Rule given them.

Locke's Eſſay, l. 2. c. 28. § 5.

The wiſeſt Heathens alſo, notwithſtanding the many great things ſaid of Nature and Reaſon, derive the Origin, Obligation, and Efficacy of all Law from the Gods alone; and eſpecially Religion, or thoſe Services and Acts of Worſhip wherewith the Gods would be honoured, which was the higheſt of Laws, they perpetually acknowledged to be wholly of Divine Authority.

Xenophon always preſents *Socrates* under this Character: "That he was ſo pious as to do nothing "without the Advice of the Gods; and if any

Mem. loc. L. 4.

Doubts

" Doubts aroſe what the Will of the Gods was, or " which way Men ought to act, his conſtant Ad- " vice (in which *Cicero* afterwards copied him) was " to go to the Oracle for Inſtruction." And he gives this Deſcription of Religion and Piety: " A pious " Man is one who ſerves the Gods, not in what " manner he pleaſes, but as the Laws made for that " purpoſe direct; and he who keeps theſe Laws will " know how he ought to ſerve the Gods; and he " who knows the Laws which ought to be obſerved " in the Service of the Gods, will ſerve them ac- " cording to the Laws; and he who ſerves the Gods " as the Laws direct, ſerves them as he ought; and " he who ſerves the Gods as he ought, is pious: " And thus have we the true Definition of a pious " Man."

Such were the Sentiments of the moſt virtuous Perſon in the Heathen World: That no one can of himſelf find out the proper Worſhip of the Gods; he muſt know the Laws which contain their Will, and what Services would be acceptable to them; and theſe Laws were given by the Gods, which is all I contend for. In the modern Language it would ſtand thus: The Religion of *Socrates* was the Religion of Nature; but the Religion of *Socrates* depended on the poſitive Laws and Communication of the Gods, therefore ſo does the Religion of Nature.

Plato, tho' he knew not the true God, ſaw the Neceſſity of this Doctrine, and is full of it; aſſuring us, " that no Mortal can make Laws to purpoſe; Rep. 4. " and that the firſt Inſtitution of them belongs not 427. " to us, but the greateſt, beſt, and firſt legal ones " belonged to *Apollo* at *Delphos*." And he commends *Minos* for having a ſecret Communication, for the Minos, p. Space of nine Years, with *Jupiter*, as with a So- 319. phiſt, to be inſtructed in the right framing of Laws, and adds, that *Sparta* enjoyed conſtant Proſperity after ſhe began to uſe them ὅτε θείοις ἦσι, *as being divine*;

divine; for the Sceptre (or Laws) of *Minos*, was nothing elſe but the Inſtruction of *Jupiter*, ὃθεν ἄλλο εἶναι ἢ τὴν παιδείαν τοῦ Διὸς, which agrees with the common Opinion of the Legiſlators having their Decrees from God, ὁ παρὰ Διὸς Νομοθέτης. *Epitharmus* affirmed, that the Divine Reaſon had invented all Arts, and taught the Uſe to be made of them; That Men never had invented any, it was the Gods that did it, and the Reaſon of Men proceeds from that which is divine. Even *Heſiod* would have the Law of Man to be from the Gods.

Euſeb. Præp. L. 12. c. 2. Cl. Alex. Strom. 5. p. 605.

Τόνδε γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων.

Demoſthenes gives this Reaſon why all Men ought to obey Law, becauſe it is εὕρημα καὶ δῶρον Θεοῦ, *the Invention and the Gift of God.* And the *Athenians*, though they looked upon *Ceres* as the Inventor of all Laws, yet they diſtinguiſhed her Myſteries by the higher Title of Θεσμοφόρια, *quaſi divinæ legis latio*; for Θεσμὸς, ſays *Heſychius*, is νόμος θεῖος, *a divine Law.* *Cicero* is frequent to this Purpoſe, that the chief and ultimate Law was, *Mens omnia ratione aut cogentis aut vetantis Dei.* And again, *Lex vera, ratio eſt recta ſummi Jovis. Et Deus legis hujus inventor, diſceptator, lator*, as I ſhall elſewhere more largely ſhew. So after him *Plutarch*; "That if we may conjecture at theſe things, Juſtice cannot be ſo properly ſaid to ſit by *Jupiter*, as that he is the moſt ancient and perfect Rule and Right of all Laws." And he relates, that *Lycurgus* being about to frame his Laws, conſulted with the Oracle of *Apollo*, in order to eſtabliſh good ones in his Country; and they were ſo reverenced in After-ages, that the judicious *Polybius* ſays, they were in his Opinion rather the Invention of a God than a Man.

Orat. 1. adverſ. Ariſtogiton.

Leg. 2. Rep. 3. apud Lactant. L. 6. c. 8.

Ad Princip. Indoct.

L. 6.

Theſe Teſtimonies may ſuffice to ſhew the Opinion of the wiſeſt Heathens on this Head: And why

why all their Legiſlators pretended to deliver nothing but what they had from Heaven, *viz.* To arm their Laws with that divine Authority which alone could carry Obligation with it, as it was what no human Reaſon or Power had a claim to. Hence *Zoroaſter* among the *Perſians* and *Bactrians* attributed his Laws to *Oromazes*; *Triſmegiſtus* of the *Egyptians* to *Mercury*; *Zamolxis* of the *Scythians* to *Veſta*; *Charondas* of the *Carthaginians* to *Saturn*; *Minos* of the *Cretans* to *Jupiter*; *Draco* and *Solon* of the *Athenians* to *Minerva*; *Lycurgus* of the *Spartans* to *Apollo*; *Numa* of the *Romans* to *Egeria*, and *Mahomet* of the *Arabians* to Gabriel.

If we enquire of the *Jews* (and they for many Ages were the only School of true Theology and Learning in the World) we ſhall find them unanimous in Opinion, that the Law of Nature could not poſſibly be grounded on the Determinations of Reaſon, becauſe of its Inconſtancy and Uncertainty; and that it could not induce an Obligation, without ſome ſuperior Authority, to which it muſt be ſubject; but was ſhewed and commanded to Human Kind by the great Author of their Beings, and which they called the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*. This they affirmed to be univerſal, natural Law, the true and living Sacrifices of the Mind, not peculiar to any Nation, Sect, or Family, which none however holy or diſtinguiſhed could challenge as their own, but given as a Rule in common to the whole Race of Men (which by being univerſally diſperſed and approved, was ſaid by the Heathens to be engraven by their *Jup. Opt. Max.* on the Minds of Men) that hence it became obligatory on Human Nature, and through all Ages; from this proceeded all thoſe univerſal Duties, together with that moral and civil Philoſophy, by which the whole Race of Men from their Entrance into the World are bound, both towards the Supreme Being, and towards one another;

another; as containing a perfect Rule of Duty, Worſhip, and whatever God required of them. That theſe were before the written Law, and every where binding, appears from the Book of *Job*, wherein moſt of the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah* or the Natural Law are to be found, as againſt Idolatry, c. xxxi. v. 26. againſt Blaſphemy, i. 5. againſt Murder, xxxi. 29. and xxiv. 14. againſt Adultery, xxxi. 9. and xxiv. 15. againſt Theft, c. xxiv. and xxxi. 7. and of Judgment, in the Paſſages of Idolatry and Adultery, beſides the reverential Acknowledgment of God, his Providence, *&c.* and a pious Worſhip of him by Prayer and Sacrifice. That the written Law was only a Repetition of them, with an Addition of ſome things peculiar to themſelves. So *Grotius* ſays, that *Moſes* did not enlarge on the Precepts of *Noah*, becauſe they were known to all Mankind. Theſe Precepts were by Gods Command tranſmitted to Poſterity; but after the Diſperſion they became much impaired and obſcured; and a dark Night of Ignorance and Barbarity covered the Earth. Even where the Names of God, Creation, Duty, and Sin remained, the Nature and true Reaſons of them were abſolutely forgot: So that it was juſtly ſaid, *Iſte Tullius rem vidit, cauſam neſcivit.*

De Jure Belli ac Pacis, L. 1. c. 2. § 5. p. 21.

Auguſtin.

And this not only agrees with the *Moſaick* Account, but with that of the Heathens. Nothing can be more expreſs than *Plato*, "That after a certain "Flood, which but few eſcaped, on the Increaſe "of Mankind, they had neither Letters, Writing "nor Laws, but obeyed the Manners and Inſtitutions "of their Fathers as Laws; that when Colonies ſepa- "rated from them, they took an Elder for their "Leader, and in their new Settlements retained the "Cuſtoms of their Anceſtors, thoſe eſpecially which "related to their Gods, and thus tranſmitted them to "Poſterity; they imprinted them on the Minds "of their Sons, and they did the ſame to their Chil-

Leg. 3. p. 680.

"dren;

" dren; by which Means when Colonies were great-
" ly multiplied, each preſerved its peculiar Laws,
" approving their own, and diſliking others. And
" this, ſays he, was the Origin of Right, Laws, and
" the different Forms of Government."

Nothing can be more explicit: Yet was it no Device of his own, but the trueſt Account of things he could meet with in the different Seminaries, to which he applied in the Search of Wiſdom. And ſuch he acknowledges was the Method of his coming at all divine Truths. If he ſpeaks of the Origin of the Creation, he has only received τὰ εἰκότα μύθον, ſome probable Tradition or Fable concerning it. If of the Immortality of the Soul, it is λόγῳ θείῳ τινὸς, *from ſome divine Word.* If of the Gods, it is, They delivered it to us; or elſe ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος, as old Tradition certifies; This, and not Nature and Reaſon, was the Ground of all his Knowledge. And when he attempted to aſſign Cauſes or Reaſons for theſe ſupernatural Subjects, ſome he obſcures inſtead of illuſtrating; and in the Manner of handling them all, ſhews that he was a Stranger to the Bottom and the Truth of Things.

Timæus p. 29. Phædo. 85. Phileb. 17. Leg. 2. 715.

Hence we plainly ſee from what Fountain thoſe active Principles, contained in the inward Law of Conſcience, were derived, and properly called κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, *Common Notions*, as paſſing from the ſame Root, through all the Branches of Mankind; and how the Notices of Good and Evil were tranſmitted from Generation to Generation. Theſe and nothing elſe were the καταλήψεις, *Comprehenſions* of *Zeno*, as containing the firſt Principles of Knowledge: the προλήψεις, *Anticipations*, *Preſumptions* or *Preſuppoſitions* (as concluding a previous Formation of them in the ſoul) of *Epicurus*; and the ὀρθὸς λόγος, *Right Reaſon*, or Law of Nature, as containing the ſeveral Traditions of the Univerſal Moral Law,

Law, which were ſcattered through the World; and not knowing how their Minds became poſſeſſed of them, vainly attributed them to an internal Growth and Culture. As alſo what the Meaning of thoſe Expreſſions is, ἔστιν ἡ ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον σύνταξις, ἡ ἁμαρτία παρὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον παράβασις, &c. *That Virtue is a Conformity to Right Reaſon, and Sin a Tranſgreſſion againſt Right Reaſon*, &c. That they cannot be intended of any natural Light, but of the Principles of the Univerſal Moral Law, taught and treaſured up in the Mind and Conſcience: And the very Out-lines of theſe great Truths were ſo conſonant to the Dictates of Reaſon, the Apprehenſions of Nature, and of ſuch vaſt Importance, that they eaſily obtained Reverence and Awe with all that were inſtructed in them, and to be looked upon (as *Plutarch* writes) the Rules of all both Mortal and Immortal: Not that which is written in Books, or engraven on Wood, but the living Reaſon in a Man's Heart, always alive and watchful together with it, never ſuffering the Mind to be without a Director.

Stobæus de Virtu. Ser. 1. p. 9.

Ad Princip. Indoct.

And as theſe were leſs or more preſerved or collected, was the Law in proportion perfect or imperfect; as according to the Degrees of Knowledge and Intention muſt the Moral Evil of their Actions be aggravated or alleviated. And on this Account were the Gentiles a Law to themſelves, having ſome of theſe common Notions or Principles in their Minds; they judged ſome Things to be lawful, and fit to be done, others unlawful, and what ought not to be done: Which inward Judgment and Perſuaſion of Conſcience, ſuperinduced upon them the utmoſt legal Obligation they were capable of, in the Circumſtances they were under. For their Minds being dark and their Hearts hardned, had horridly depraved the Law of their Being, and ſo far departed from the Purity and Perfection

fection of their Nature, as to be *ſubject to the Law of Sin and Death. Becauſe the carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God: For it is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* Rom. viii. 7. Yet as *without the Law, Sin is dead,* Rom. vii. 8. Therefore *God winked at thoſe times of Ignorance,* when the Means of coming at true Knowledge was not afforded them; which could not have been, if Reaſon were a ſufficient Director, or intended by God to diſcover at all times a full, perfect, and adequate Rule of Duty. And that it could not do ſo, is evident from their not knowing how to apply the very common Notions they had, to the ſeveral Actions of Life, ſo as to make them a Rule to walk by. Such was *Arrian*'s Complaint, Τοῦτό ἐϛι τὸ αἴτιον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντων τῶν κακῶν τὸ τὰς προλήψεις τὰς κοινὰς μὴ δύνασθαι ἐφαρμόζειν ταῖς ἐπὶ μέρους; *That the Cauſe of all Evil to Man, was the not knowing how to apply common Notions to particular Caſes*; which for ever ſubjected them to Doubt and Error, and rendred the many excellent Precepts among them of little Service or Uſe to the Conduct of their moral Actions. Epictet. l. 3. c. 26.

And that the many great things ſpoken by them of Reaſon and Nature, was owing to an Inability of deducing things from their firſt and true Principles, may, I think, fairly be collected from the deep Senſe they had thro' all the Ages of Philoſophy, of the Weakneſs and Irregularity of Nature, the Dimneſs and Inſufficiency of Reaſon, the Remoteneſs and Obſcurity of Truth, the Defectiveneſs of natural Conſcience, the extreme Difficulty of knowing what was Virtuous, or doing what was Good; and therefore ſtood in need of ſome better Guide and Inſtructor. It was an Aphoriſm of *Solon*, "That the Mind of the "Gods is entirely hid from Men; of others, that "Truth lies concealed as it were in a deep Pit." *Plato* frequently laments the Painfulneſs and Trouble Euſeb. Præp. l. 13. c. 13. p. 688.

to

to perform any morally good or virtuous Action: "That to explain Wiſdom is not indeed very difficult, "but to reduce it to Uſe and Practice, is moſt dif- "ficult." And that according to the old Proverb, *Good Things are very difficult*, χαλεπὰ καλὰ. *Cicero* often expreſſes himſelf to this Purpoſe, *Si tales nos natura genuiſſet*, &c. If we had come into the World in ſuch Circumſtances, as that we could clearly and diſtinctly have diſcerned Nature herſelf, and have been able in the Courſe of our Lives to follow her true and uncorrupted Directions; this alone might have been ſufficient, and there would have been little need of Teaching and Inſtruction: But now Nature has given us only ſome ſmall Sparks of Right Reaſon, which we ſo quickly extinguiſh with corrupt Opinions and evil Practices, that the true Light of Nature no where appears: As ſoon as we are brought into the World, immediately we dwell in the midſt of all Wickedneſs, and are ſurrounded with a number of moſt perverſe and fooliſh Opinions; ſo that we ſeem to ſuck in Error with our Nurſes Milk: Afterwards when we return to our Parents, and are committed to Tutors, then we are further ſtocked with ſuch Variety of Errors, that Truth becomes perfectly overwhelmed with Falſhood; and the moſt natural Sentiments of our Minds are entirely ſtifled with confirmed Follies: But when, after all this, we enter upon Buſineſs in the World, and make the Multitude, conſpiring every where in Wickedneſs, our great Guide and Example; then our very Nature itſelf is wholly transformed, as it were, into corrupt Opinions. *Lucretius* expreſſes this very juſtly:

Phileb. p. 16. Cratyl. 385. Tuſc. Q. l. 3. n. 1.

O miſeras hominum mentes, O pectora cæca,
Qualibus in tenebris vitæ, quantiſque periclis
Degitur hoc ævi, quodcunque eſt ——

So

So that if Reaſon be ſufficient to all the great Purpoſes which relate to God, Religion, and eternal Happineſs, it ſlumbered and ſlept during the long State of Paganiſm; during which it was always wandring, never found the Paths of Truth and Duty; was drawn away into endleſs Fooleries inſtead of Religion, and paid their Adorations to every Being in Heaven and Earth, except the true God. *Iamblichus*, though a Heathen, ſaw this, and acknowledged there was but one Remedy for all its Errors, Doubts, and Diſturbances, and that is, to obtain (if poſſibly it can) ſome Particles of Divine Light. De Myſt. §. 3. c. 18.

What is the Sum of this, in the Confeſſion of the very Heathens, but that the World was in a State of utter Darkneſs and Perplexity? they were not able to determine for themſelves, nor knew where to find an Inſtructor that they could with Safety rely upon.

But though the ſeveral Articles hitherto advanced be ever ſo conſonant to Univerſal Hiſtory and Experience; yet ſtrong Prejudices are conceived againſt this Hypotheſis in general, as derogating from the Dignity of human Nature and Reaſon. Were this indeed true, it ought to be ſcorned and rejected; but whilſt we contend to give Man his Due, let us be careful to give God his Due alſo. It is undeniable that there are certain Limits given to every created Power, an appointed Sphere for its Activity and Bounds which it cannot paſs: And from theſe we muſt regulate and form our Judgments concerning them. If then Reaſon be not the Meaſure of Truth; if infinite Productions and Counſels of the eternal Mind eſcape it; if it cannot, with the ordinary Uſe of its Faculties, diſcover the whole Syſtem of ſpiritual Truths and Things; if it cannot univerſally, clearly, and perfectly diſtinguiſh Good and Evil in all the various Inſtances of Duty and

and Sin; if it cannot form a Rule of Life to direct Man to the Ends of his Being, and point out the ſeveral Motives to oblige and influence his Practice; its Dignity cannot be diminiſhed by receiving Inſtruction from the Fountain of all Knowledge: So far from being injurious, that it is the higheſt Advancement of Reaſon, to enrich and improve it with new Diſcoveries of the moſt important Truths, to open freſh Scenes of Wonder for its Contemplation, and ſhew an unerring way to its final Happineſs. For as natural Light cannot contain all that may be known of God or his Will; and where that ends, Faith begins; Revelation therefore ſeems highly becoming the Divine Goodneſs, and moſt conſonant to the rational Faculties and the true Intereſt of Man.

Whenever Man attains the Knowledge of ſupernatural Objects and Truths, it is always by Inſtruction; Reaſon is never the Diſcoverer, but only the Faculty that perceives the Certainty and Meaning of them. When an Idea is conſentaneous to the Object, it is true; yet the Mind which receives it, is neither the Idea nor Object, but the Diſcerner of the Agreement between them. When we deduce Propoſitions from evident Principles, Reaſon is neither the Principle nor Concluſion, but the diſcurſive Operation of the Intellect, which by viewing the Connexion and neceſſary Dependence they have on each other, perceives the Certainty of the Inference: So that when divine Truths are propounded, the Office of Reaſon is to ſatisfy the Underſtanding that they are Good, and from God, therefore perfective of our Natures, and moſt fit to be believed and obeyed; yet is neither the Propounder, nor Obeyer of them; the firſt is from the Will of God, the other a Determination of the Will of Man.

So that Reaſon, though not Omnipotent, is to the moſt excellent Purpoſes, *i. e.* to all the Ends whereby Man is conſtituted what he is, a rational Creature. To examine the Truth of Things, ſeparate it from Falſhood, and paſs Judgment upon them, whether they be reaſonable or not, and give degrees of Aſſent according to the apparent Evidence or Probability that attends them: To know Truth, and to obey it is the whole of Man; the one is the Act of the Underſtanding, the other of the Will. The End of Reaſon is, to direct us in the Search of it, ſo that when found, we may know it and enjoy it.

In human Sciences, the Mind either deſcends from well-known Principles, to trace and ſearch out neceſſarily dependent or collateral Truths: Or it aſcends from given Effects to inveſtigate the Origin or Cauſe of them. In both, the Buſineſs of Reaſon is to find out proper intermediate Ideas, and range them in ſuch Order as to perceive their Coherence, that the Concluſion may be right; and know what Aſſent is to be given to the Propoſition ſought for. The Concluſion of an Argument which the *Greeks* called ἀπόδειξις, *Cicero* defined to be "The "Reaſon which leads us from things apprehended "and underſtood, to thoſe things which were not ap- "prehended:" This Inference, or deducing of one Truth from another, is juſtly eſteemed the higheſt Act of the rational Faculty, and is no more than judging of the Agreement between them. For tho' it be forced to uſe many intermediate Truths, to unite Extremes together when they lie remote, yet when theſe exactly agree with the precedent and ſubſequent ones, as Links in a Chain, they ſhew the Connexion between the Extremes however diſtant, and the Mind by viewing this, perceives the Certainty of the Illation, that the Procedure is regular, and the Concluſion manifeſtly true. For where

Acad. Qu. l. 4. n. 8. in fin.

the Connexion is evident, ſo will the Inference be; where that is fallacious, obſcure, or incoherent; this will be weak, doubtful, and inconcluſive. And from ſuch View the Mind diſcovers what kind of Aſſent it ought to give: Where there can be no Exception to the Evidence, the Reſult is Knowledge; where the Agreement is not clear, and yet the Teſtimonies of one ſide outweigh the other, it is Probability; where there is an apparent Diſagreement, it is Falſhood.

This is the great Uſe of that Faculty which God has given us for our Direction and Advancement in Knowledge, becauſe without this the Mind could never diſtinguiſh between Certainty, Probability, or Error. And rational Knowledge is what a Man comes at by ſuch Procedure, not by Chance or Accident; he receives or believes nothing for Truth, but as Reaſon directs him, *i. e.* he believes as a rational Creature. And all who judge and act upon ſuch Grounds, who believe or do nothing but what they are convinced by the Uſe of their Faculties according to the beſt of their Power, they ought to do, may be juſtly ſaid to live according to Reaſon, and do their Duty as rational Creatures.

On the ſame account, Reaſon can never be excluded from, but muſt go hand in hand with Religion, which, is λογικὴ λατρεία, *a reaſonable Service*, ſuch a Worſhip as a rational Man on conſidering it, muſt conclude to be the moſt fitting for him to offer, and the Supreme Being to accept. For God never commands, but he convinces alſo; we cannot obey without believing, nor believe we know not what, nor know but by diſcerning the Nature and Obligation of the Duty; and Obedience being the Act of Underſtanding and Free-will, is what alone entitles it to Reward. In this God deals with us as Men, not to compel irreſiſtibly,

Rom. xii. 1.

bly, but to give ſufficient Evidence for the Truth and Neceſſity of whatever he requires, *i. e.* all that the Nature of the thing to be proved is capable of, and it cannot be reaſonable for Men to expect more; after which he leaves them to themſelves, to their own free Determination; that if they chooſe Obedience, they may be entitled to Reward; if Diſobedience, be ſubject to Puniſhment.

If Men therefore are not careleſs to neglect, or blinded by Prejudices not to ſee the Evidence which is offered, but will impartially uſe their Faculties of Examining, Reaſoning, and Judging, they cannot fail being perſuaded by many certain Proofs of the Truths in Religion, and clearly perceive that there is the higheſt Reaſon in the World to believe and obey them. For if Men will not be convinced by the Evidence they have, which is the moſt credible and rational that can be offered, neither would they by any other: And their Disbelief is apparently owing, not to want of Proof, but to a careleſs Inattention, or ſome wicked unruly Paſſions, which have a greater Intereſt in their Hearts, than Reaſon has in their Minds, and hurries them away to act ſo directly contrary to all Evidence and Truth.

The great Difference between the Objects of human Knowledge and divine, is, that in the former there is a ſpacious Field for new Acquiſitions and Improvements: Experience, Obſervation, and Induſtry make freſh Diſcoveries in the Arts, Sciences, and Natural Philoſophy: Penetration into one Effect or Cauſe helps to explain another: The Progreſs of one Age in real Learning is of great Benefit to ſucceeding Ages: And whilſt the Mind buſies it ſelf in Enquiries after uſeful Wiſdom, it will by Reflexion, Demonſtration, Experiments, and Hiſtorical Obſervations add to its former Store; and by having larger Views, more Objects and Ideas,

and conſequently more Truths to ſpeculate and reaſon upon, greatly extends its Comprehenſion and Knowledge.

But in divine inviſible Objects, it is far otherwiſe; the Boundary is fixed, our Inquiries limited to what is revealed, and all further Search vain and unlawful. Theſe things are above the Diſcovery of Reaſon, it had no Principles from which it could regularly deduce them, by any natural Uſe of its Faculties; and without ſupernatural Inſtruction could never have attained the leaſt Knowledge or Probability concerning them. It was not poſſible for any Idea, Notion, or Apprehenſion of them to enter the Mind, but by the Mediation of ſome external Agency: So that all we do, or can hope to know of them in this World, is from Revelation. Reaſon indeed, or the Workings of an inquiſitive ſagacious Mind, may improve itſelf, but not the Subject: It may diſcover variety of Arguments to explain the Beauties, and ſhew the Neceſſity of ſupernatural Truths, but it cannot add one to the original Stock; nor ſpeak a Word of their Eſſence or Nature beyond what Revelation teaches. So that Revelation (in Mr. *Locke*'s Words) is nothing but Reaſon enlarged by a new ſet of Diſcoveries, not laid within the reach of its natural Faculties, but communicated by God immediately, which Reaſon vouches the Truth of, by the Teſtimony and Proof it gives, that they come from God.

And here we muſt obſerve, that as divine Truths are ſuch, which mere Reaſon could not diſcover, (for the Natural Man, or Natural Reaſon perceives them not, but they are ſpiritually diſcerned by the ſame Faculty indeed, but not till aſſiſted and taught by God) therefore God made ſuch Manifeſtations as were neceſſary to the End of our Being, in a manner ſuitable to our Capacities, and a Degree fitting our Condition. Whence it will follow,

low, *Firſt*, That though a Propoſition revealed by God, cannot be made out by natural Principles, ſo as to frame any diſtinct or clear Reaſonings concerning it, it ought not on that Account to be rejected: Becauſe if our natural Faculties by their uſual Procedure could have come at them, there had been no need of Revelation: Or how there can be a Revelation (if there be any Propriety in the Term) to one, of what he certainly knows already, is very hard to be conceived, and at beſt is a very unwarrantable Explanation of a divine Interpoſition; and if Revelation was neceſſary, then the Degree of it muſt depend upon the Divine Will and Pleaſure; and we need not know more than he thinks ſufficient for us. Nor, *Secondly*, on the other hand, Becauſe the Neceſſity of a Revealed Truth may ſeem capable of being proved by Reaſon, that therefore we ſhould conclude it was originally a natural Dictate of it; for all divine Emanations are highly agreeable to the moſt perfect Reaſon: But if the Object had not been manifeſted, the Mind had never ſeen it, or looked out for Proofs to eſtabliſh the Clearneſs and Validity of it. And the only Conſequence of this, is, that Truths not diſcoverable by natural Light, when made known by Revelation, are apparently moſt agreeable to ſound unprejudiced Reaſon: That in theſe Caſes though Reaſon be the Eye or Faculty that ſees, yet in things pertaining to God, Revelation only is the Light whereby it is enabled to do it; for Natural Reaſon, if not taught by God, would have for ever remained ignorant of them.

Whenever ſupernatural Objects are propounded to the Mind for its Contemplation, Knowledge, or Aſſent, it has no other Office (yet this is a moſt important one) but to inquire, whether they be of divine Original or not: And it has two ſure Rules for its Direction herein. *Firſt*, The Intrinſick Good-

neſs and Excellency of the Revelation; And, *Secondy*, all the external Proofs, the Nature of the Subject will admit, of its being immediately and directly from God. From whence the Concluſion will naturally follow; that whatever has theſe Teſtimonies, ought to be received as a Rule of Faith and Action; becauſe there cannot be a plainer Dictate of Reaſon than this, that whatever is from God muſt be certainly true, and whatever he commands ought to be obſerved and obeyed.

And in this God deals with us as with rational Creatures, requires nothing that does not carry ſuch Conviction with it, that we muſt acknowledge to be moſt reaſonable, and therefore what by our own Principles ought to determine our Judgment, and regulate our Practice. God himſelf appeals to this Deciſion, and ſubmits the Equity of his Commands and Proceedings to this very Rule; *Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard, what could have been done more, that I have not done—Hear now,—is not my way equal, are not your ways unequal?* The Juſtice of his Dealings is ſo evident, that he willingly refers the Determination of it our own Reaſon.

Iſ. v. 3.

Ezek. xviii. 25.

The only juſt Light then that we can take a view of Nature and Antiquity in, is ſuch an one as ſhews Natural Reaſon to be clear enough to perceive the Truth and the Neceſſity of its Deductions, when propoſed and ſhewn; but not ſtrong enough to diſcover it, or draw right Deductions from it.

The Evidence of this appears from comparing the Ages of Philoſophy and Chriſtianity; for why were Divine Truths ſo clearly known, ſo readily embraced, and ſo univerſally obeyed in one and not in the other; yet Reaſon was as ſtrong in the Philoſopher as the Chriſtian? The only Anſwer it can receive is obvious, Natural Reaſon could not diſcern them, becauſe it had not been inſtructed in them. But it was no ſooner taught by Revelation,

but

but it ſaw and acknowledged the Truth and Beauty of them.

And this View of Antiquity (ſays a learned Modern) is true with regard to Natural Religion in general: Where we find Human Reaſon could penetrate very far into the eſſential Difference of things; but wanting the true Principles of Religion, the Ancients neither knew the true Origin of Obligation, nor the Conſequence of Obedience. Revelation has diſcovered theſe Principles, and we now wonder that ſuch Prodigies of Parts and Knowledge could commit the groſs Abſurdities that are to be found in their beſt Treatiſes of Morality. Which yet does not hinder us from falling into a greater and worſe Deluſion. For ſeeing of late ſeveral excellent Syſtems of Morals under the Title of *The Principles of Natural Religion*, that diſclaim the Aid of Revelation, we are apt to think them indeed the Diſcoveries of Natural Religion, and ſo regard their Excellencies as an Objection to the Neceſſity of any farther Light. The Pretence is plauſible; but ſurely there muſt be ſome Miſtake at the bottom; and the immenſe Difference in point of Perfection between theſe imaginary Productions of Reaſon, and thoſe real ones of the moſt learned Antients, will increaſe our Suſpicion. The Truth is, theſe modern Syſtem-Writers had an Aid, which as they do not acknowledge, ſo I perſuade myſelf they did not perceive. This Aid were the true Principles of Religion, delivered by Revelation; Principles ſo clear and evident, that they are now miſtaken to be amongſt the firſt and ſimpleſt Ideas. But thoſe who underſtand Antiquity, know the Matter to be far otherwiſe.

Mr. *Locke* was not prejudiced in this Cauſe, yet ſays, "How ſhort their ſeveral Syſtems (*viz.* of "the Philoſophers) came of the Perfection of a "true and complete Morality, is very viſible. And "if, ſince that the Chriſtian Philoſophers have much Reaſonab. of Chriſt. p. 266.

" outdone them, yet we may obſerve, the firſt Know-
" ledge of the Truths they have added, are owing
" to Revelation; tho' as ſoon as they are heard and
" conſidered, they are found to be agreeable to
" Reaſon, and ſuch as can by no means be contradic-
" ted. Every one may obſerve a great many Truths
" which he receives at firſt from others, and rea-
" dily aſſents to as conſonant to Reaſon, which he
" would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond
" his Strength to have diſcovered himſelf. Native
" and original Truth is not ſo eaſily wrought out of
" the Mine, as we who have it delivered, ready dug
" and faſhioned, into our hands, are apt to imagine.
Id. p. 267 " Whatever was the Cauſe, 'tis plain in fact, Hu-
" man Reaſon unaſſiſted, failed Men in its great
" and proper Buſineſs of Morality: It never from
" unqueſtionable Principles, by their Deductions,
" made out an entire Body of the *Law of Nature*."
P. 278. And afterwards, " Many are beholden to Revela-
" tion, who do not acknowledge it."

This is the plain undeniable Fact, and cannot be accounted for on any other Principles; and therefore what Infidelity advances, that Reaſon is Maſter of all the Truths which Revelation has diſcovered, is abſolutely falſe, and a Contradiction to all that is known of Antiquity; and they who have unwarily made Conceſſions of the like Nature, have ſeen the Atheiſt retort upon them, and ſhew from their own Principles, that if Reaſon can do every thing, Chriſtianity cannot be neceſſary. They who deny any Uſe of Reaſon to ſatisfy the Mind in Matters of revealed Truths, deſtroy the Means that God has afforded to convince us of the Reaſonableneſs and Obligation of Duty; and by unjuſtifiable Pretences to the Spirit have advanced the moſt extravagant Fancies an over-heated Brain could ſuggeſt; and inſtead of a Rational Worſhip have fallen into all the Deluſions of Madneſs and Enthuſiaſm.

The

The middle Way therefore between the two Extremes admits of no Objection: That there is a Uſe of Reaſon without Prejudice to Religion. God propoſes ſomething to the Underſtanding, which by Natural Reaſon it could not have found out; the Rational Faculty perceives the Truth and Agreeableneſs thereof, with the Certainty of its being from God, therefore yields up its Aſſent, and believes upon good Reaſons; for he cannot be ſaid to believe who has no Reaſon for ſo doing, becauſe a Rational Mind cannot determine its Aſſent but upon rational Grounds and Evidence. The Underſtanding however cannot exerciſe its Faculties about any of the Truths of God, till it is inſtructed, and has the proper Notices communicated to it; but theſe are not diſcoverable *à priori*, from any Light of Nature, but all taken from the divine Act of Revelation: Yet in this God no way ceaſes to deal with us as Men; he only preſents freſh Objects, and gives new Notices of things, thereby indeed extending and enlarging our Proſpect, but does not alter the Faculties we had before. Our Reaſon has ſtill the ſame Uſe, only a wider Compaſs to employ and exert itſelf in, with different Lights and Aſſiſtances to judge and determine by.

This ſurely is not to degrade, but to exalt Reaſon, and that to the nobleſt and moſt excellent Purpoſes. To adore the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs; to ſatisfy ourſelves in the moſt important Point, that the Religion we profeſs is from God; to diſtinguiſh Truth from Falſhood, and reject all Impoſtures or Pretences to Revelation, either from the Impiety or Contradiction of the Doctrine, or from Inſufficiency of Proof that it is from God.

Hence we are ſure, that whatever implies a Contradiction, or is repugnant to any of the Divine Attributes, cannot be a Revelation from God; and if an Angel from Heaven ſhould teach ſuch Doctrines,

we

we muſt reject them. Becauſe what is inconſiſtent with certain Truth, muſt certainly be falſe: And if Reaſon, where it is cleareſt, be falſe, we can have no Aſſurance it is ever true, and conſequently have no Certainty either in Science or Faith. Nor can two Truths be contrary to each other, becauſe nothing can be true and falſe at the ſame time. So Impoſſibilities cannot be matter of Faith, becauſe they are no Acts of Power, no Effects of Omnipotence; and what is not to be produced, is not to be believed. Nor can we believe Incredibilities, for that would be to believe and disbelieve the ſame thing; or for Reaſon to aſſent to an unreaſonable thing, which are Contradictions.

But I need not inſiſt on this: as Infidelity has not been able to ſhew that Religion recommends any thing impious, abſurd, impoſſible, or contradictory; any thing that is not perfective of our Beings, ſuitable to our Inclinations, and tending to our final Good; all which are moſt conſiſtent with Truth, and reconcilable to Reaſon, what it cannot but approve, ſo as to believe what is true, and embrace what will render it happy: On this account Religion muſt be a rational Service, as propoſing nothing to be done but what is moſt agreeable to the Deſires and Expectations of Nature: Nothing to be believed, but what an honeſt inform'd Mind, by the common Ways of Knowledge, may ſatisfy itſelf of its Truth, and coming from God. Our Intellectual Faculty therefore is never ſo well employ'd, as in ſatisfying itſelf and others, that the Truths of God are moſt exactly conformable to its own Principles, that the Good of his Creatures ſeems to be the Rule and Reaſon of all he enjoins; and therefore deſerve from us the fulleſt Credit, the ſtrongeſt Love, and the moſt prevailing Influence.

The great Hinge on which all Religion turns, is, That there is a God, and that he will reward and pu-

puniſh. God therefore manifeſted himſelf and his Attributes, and added two eſpecial Proofs thereof for our Conviction; neceſſary Exiſtence, and the Works of Creation: Both which are ſo obvious when propoſed to our natural Faculties, that the World has miſtaken them for ſelf-evident innate Principles; as alſo the neceſſary Conſequences from them: That neceſſary Exiſtence is eternal; That Omnipotence can do every thing which does not imply a Contradiction; That Infinite Truth can neither deceive nor be deceived; That unerring Righteouſneſs can will nothing but what is juſt and good; That the Supreme muſt have abſolute Authority over all Beings dependent upon it, *&c.*

The Second Propoſition is clearly deducible from the other, by the ſtricteſt Principles of Reaſon: That God is juſt in all his Dealings: That Juſtice will puniſh Guilt; That Guilt is offending where there is a Power of doing otherwiſe; That Man might have done otherwiſe, becauſe he is a free Agent; That he is a free Agent, as having with him a Power of Self-determination.

So that if we ſearch this Matter to the Bottom, we ſhall find that the Reaſon of Faith is the Foundation of all Religion; both the Articles of this Univerſal Creed, that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that ſeek him, being manifeſted from Revelation only. For Man, as rational, muſt propoſe and deſire ſome End: The End of all Beings is the Perfection of their Nature; the Perfection of any Nature is enjoying all the Happineſs it is capable of. So again, to deſire the End, is to deſire the Means alſo: The Means to attain Happineſs, is to procure his Favour, on whom the beſtowing of it ſolely depends. To procure his Favour, is the doing what he commands. His Commands are his Will; and his Will he has revealed to us in the Scriptures. So that the revealed Will of God is the

the only Rule and Law of Action. Becauſe he enjoins it, the Obligation is perpetual; and Obedience being the only Means of Happineſs, the Reaſons for it are immutable. Therefore abſolute Compliance with the divine revealed Will, is the whole of Religion, or the End of Man; and on that account moſt fit and reaſonable for him to be faithful and diligent in the Practice of it. To which may be added, that as God has ſeveral Ways revealed himſelf, yet the Excellencies of the Goſpel-Revelation are apparently above all others.

But further: If we would conſider the Agreement of Reaſon with Faith, in the ſtricteſt Acceptation of the Word: As whatever we come at the Knowledge of by the Uſe of our Faculties, is properly Matter of Reaſon; ſo what is above their Diſcovery, is above Reaſon, and conſequently when revealed to us, are Matters of Faith. Certainly there can be nothing unreaſonable in this Procedure; becauſe tho' God has given us Reaſon, he has neither debarred himſelf of, nor is it contrary to any known Attributes to afford us the Light of Revelation; for there is always room for Infinite Wiſdom to make freſh Diſcoveries to his Creatures, as Infinite Power can always give ſufficient Teſtimony of their being from God. To deprive him of theſe, is to deny his very Being; and to find fault with what tends to our Perfection, muſt be very ungrateful and unreaſonable. Again, whatever God reveals is certainly true, therefore no doubt can be made of it; it muſt overrule all Opinions, Prejudices, and Intereſts; it has a juſt Right to be received with a full Aſſent, *i. e.* Faith. And ſuch a Submiſſion as this of Reaſon to Faith (even in Mr. *Locke*'s Opinion) takes not away the Land-marks of Knowledge, ſhakes not the Foundations of Reaſon, but leaves us that Uſe of our Faculties for which they were given us; and conſequently nothing in Faith can be contrary to Reaſon.

Human Underſt. l. 4. c. 18. §. 10. p. 421.

Reaſon. The ſame learned Writer thus ſums it up. "There is nothing more required of a Chriſtian, but that he receive all the Parts of Divine Revelation with a Docility and Diſpoſition prepared to embrace and aſſent to all Truths coming from God; and ſubmit his Mind to whatſoever ſhall appear to him to bear that Character." Reaſonab. of Chriſt. p. 300.

The Things ſuppoſed to be the Objects of this Knowledge, or above Reaſon, in the Opinion of the Ancients, were included under that Part of Theology, termed *Metaphyſical*, above or beyond Nature. In this Claſs, *Plato* ranges the Contemplation of all Divine things; ſuch as, the Firſt Being or Cauſe, the Origin of Things, the Wonders of Providence, the Worſhip of God, the Myſteries of Religion, the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State. He never pretended one of theſe to be diſcoverable by Reaſon, but always ingenuouſly confeſſes them to be learned by Traditions brought from the Barbarians, *viz.* the *Jews*, &c. They were frequently termed τὰ θαυμασὰ, *wonderful things*; as being neither diſcoverable nor demonſtrable by Reaſon. On which very account *Ariſtotle* eſteemed them ἄχρησὰ, *uſeleſs things*, becauſe beyond the Sphere of his, and all natural Reaſon and Underſtanding; and ſtyled thoſe Philoſophers, who dwelt much in the Contemplation of ſuch Subjects, φιλομύθες, *Lovers of Fable or Tradition.*

Now Faith is nothing but a firm Aſſent of the Mind (which is an Act of Reaſon) to ſome Propoſition or Truth, upon the Credit and infallible Teſtimony of the Propoſer, which is God. To believe on the Teſtimony of God, is Faith: To know it is divine Teſtimony, is a Matter of Reaſon, in perceiving it has all the clear Evidences the Nature of the thing will admit of to conclude its Aſſent. For as on the one hand, Reaſon cannot aſſent to what it does not know or believe; ſo on the other,

other, it is highly unreaſonable not to believe a Thing that has all the Marks of Certainty it poſſibly can have, for its Credibility. This is *Ariſtotle*'s own Rule; "Not to expect in all things "the ſame Exactneſs, but in every thing to con- "tent ourſelves with ſuch a Method as the ſub- "ject Matter will bear." Mathematicks require a different Demonſtration from Morals, and Morals from Phyſicks; yet each of theſe Kinds of Evidence ſatisfies the Mind, ſo as to leave no room of their unqueſtionable Truth: For we can know Things only as they are to be known, which muſt be according to the Nature of Things; and to expect a Proof which Nature is incapable of, can neither be reaſonable, nor juſt.

Ethic. l. 1. c. 7.

But the Queſtion in Matters purely of Faith, is not, whether what God ſays be true (for that is already ſuppoſed) but whether he hath ſpoken it or not. To ſatisfy us in this, we can only enquire of unprejudiced Reaſon, what are the utmoſt Proofs the Subject will bear, which muſt be as convincing as any other Kind of Demonſtration; becauſe where Reaſon has all it can require, it will, and muſt be ſatisfied. Now ſome things are capable of direct Arguments, others only of indirect ones; in either Caſe, if we have the proper and natural Proofs, it is ſufficient; we follow our Reaſon, it being reaſonable to believe any thing, which is as true, as in the Nature of Things it poſſibly can be.

As to Matters of Revelation therefore, we cannot require more than the Teſtimony of competent and undoubted Witneſſes, Propheſy, Miracles, Hiſtory, Univerſal Tradition, the Acknowledgment of all Ages, the Nature of Things delivered, and unprejudiced Reaſon aſſiſting the Mind in theſe Diſquiſitions; becauſe theſe are the higheſt Atteſtations that can be brought for the Support of ſuch Truths. Where then theſe Teſtimonies concur

Vid. Bp. London Paſt. Lett. 1. p. 13.

cur and are unexceptionable, to deny Aſſent would be unreaſonable, becauſe it is all the Nature of the Thing will admit, and on that Account, a proper Object for the Underſtanding. To demand more is contrary to Nature, therefore contrary to Reaſon, becauſe what it knows to be falſe, it cannot believe. And as God never requires Faith as a Duty, but he gives ſufficient Arguments to induce it, Infidelity muſt be inexcuſable. He that will not enquire into theſe Motives, takes his Belief upon truſt, and has no Reaſon for what he does: He that upon enquiry finds them as competent as the Nature of Things will admit, yet believes not, is irrational as the other, having no Reaſon for refuſing ſo to do. And they who are reſolved not to believe a ſufficient Evidence, neither *would they be* perſuaded *though one roſe from the Dead.* Thus Reaſon has its proper and due Authority, though in Subjects of pure Divine Revelation, the Authority of God will always be found the higheſt Reaſon, therefore have they the ſtrongeſt Demand to our Belief. And he who denies theſe to be proper Evidences of a Revelation, muſt at the ſame time deny that it is poſſible for God to make any Revelation, that can be rationally believed.

Nor is all this ſaying any more, than that God made us Rational Creatures, and deals with us as ſuch, *i. e.* what we are; and to do otherwiſe would caſt an Imputation on his Juſtice or Wiſdom. Nor can Faith and Reaſon be oppoſite, though ſeveral Things; but only different Notices and Methods of coming at Knowledge, and proving Truths by ſuch Principles as they are capable of, and is moſt reaſonable to do. So that Faith is no more than the higheſt inſtructed Reaſon, no Principle in one contradicts the other. Revelation diſcovers ſome glorious Truths, and Reaſon bears witneſs that they

they are credible, from God, and ought to be believed and obeyed. And therefore the moſt exalted Doctrines of Revelation offer no Injury or Violence to Reaſon, but are Aids and Enlargements to it in this dark imperfect State: And therefore may demand the moſt ſerious Attention of every Rational Creature.

It is therefore a vain and falſe Inſinuation of Infidelity, that we muſt give up our Reaſon, if we would embrace Revelation: For we only believe, becauſe it is moſt reaſonable ſo to do. When upon an impartial Examination, Reaſon finds the Evidences to be full and ſufficient, it pronounces that the Revelation ought to be received, and as a neceſſary Conſequence thereof, directs us to give up ourſelves to the Guidance of it. But here Reaſon ſtops; not as ſet aſide by Revelation, but as taking Revelation for its Guide, and not thinking itſelf at Liberty to call in queſtion the Wiſdom and Experience of any Part, after it is ſatisfied that the whole comes from God.

Bp. Lond. 2d. Paſt. Lett. p. 4.

Neither is it any Objection to the Reaſonableneſs of Revelation, that we are not able to comprehend the whole of thoſe Subjects it exhibits to us. To manifeſt them in any Degree is matter of Divine Pleaſure, and God cannot be under the leaſt Neceſſity to unfold all the Reaſons that belong to them. There are *ſecret Things which belong unto the Lord our God, and things that are revealed.* To attempt knowing what is ſecret and withheld from us, is Arrogance: Our Knowledge is confined to revealed Things, and only ſo far as they are revealed. That is the preſcribed Bounds, beyond which no created Underſtanding can paſs. For where God is ſilent, neither Heaven nor Earth can give us further Light.

Deut. xxix. 29.

When

When therefore Revelation affirms a Thing vaſtly beyond our Comprehenſion, but no way contrary to our Reaſon, we have nothing to do but ſubmit, to believe, though our Reaſon cannot tell us why or how ſuch things are; becauſe we cannot meaſure the Wiſdom or the Works of God; it therefore may be true, though we are ignorant of it; nay, it infallibly muſt be ſo, becauſe God has ſaid it, and no Reaſon can make us doubt of his Veracity. And there is an Evidence of eternal Truth, which the Mind of Man, with its moſt refined Speculations could neither diſcover nor comprehend, and therefore muſt have ſome other Foundation, which can be none elſe, but thoſe Diſcoveries which infinite Wiſdom makes of itſelf: And conſequently the nobleſt Mark of true and ſolid Reaſon is, to be determined by that Authority which is unerring, and has a Right to demand an implicit Subjection. "For the "holy Scripture (ſays Mr. *Locke*, in the laſt Year "of his Life) has God for its Author, Salvation "for its End, and Truth without any mixture of "Error for its Matter." Poſthum. Works. p. 344.

"Therefore (ſays the ſame Author) I gratefully "receive, and rejoice in the Light of Revelation, "which ſets me at reſt in many things, the Manner "whereof my poor Reaſon can by no means make "out to me."

But to reject or disbelieve Things, becauſe we underſtand not the whole of their Nature, Modes of Exiſtence or Fitneſs, is not Reaſon but Stupidity. It is either to make our Minds the Rule of Truth, or to affirm that, becauſe God has not given us all the Reaſons of Things, it is not poſſible there ſhould be any; both which are equally irrational. For it is of the Nature of theſe Things to be above Reaſon, *i. e.* what of itſelf it could not have diſcovered: But it is not above Reaſon, when inſtructed, to diſcern the Truth and Certainty of them, ſo far as

is revealed. To do this, is ſufficient; to do more, is impoſſible; this is the only Meaſure and Rule of Faith.

"To reject a Revelation (ſays an excellent Prelate) becauſe we cannot clearly ſee the Fitneſs "and Expedience of every Part, is to make ourſelves as knowing as God; whoſe Wiſdom is infinite, and the Depth of whoſe Diſpenſations, "with the Reaſons and Ends of them, are "not to be fathomed by our ſhort and narrow "Comprehenſions: It is the greateſt Folly as well as "Preſumption to conclude that this or that Revelation cannot come from God, becauſe we cannot ſee in every Reſpect the Fitneſs and Reaſonableneſs of it. The true Inference is, that the "Revelation is therefore wiſe, good, and juſt, "and fit to be received, and ſubmitted to by us, "becauſe we have ſufficient Reaſon to believe that "it came from God. For ſo far he has made us "competent Judges, in as much as Natural Reaſon "informs us what are the proper Evidences of a "Divine Revelation. But for us to attempt to "make a Judgment of the Fitneſs of the Means "to attain the End, is to put ourſelves in the "Place of God, and to forget that we are frail "Men; that is, ſhort-ſighted and ignorant Creatures, who know very little of Divine Matters, "farther than that it has pleaſed God to reveal "them to us."

Bp. Lond. 1ſt Paſt. Let. p. 13.

The Reſurrection of the Body is what no Force of human Wiſdom could have diſcovered: Yet Reaſon tells us it is poſſible, and within the Power of God to effect it; therefore the Underſtanding may fully aſſent to it, without knowing the Bounds of Omnipotence, or in what manner he will accompliſh, and bring it to paſs. The Doctrine of the ever bleſſed Trinity ſurpaſſes the Comprehenſion of Men and Angels, yet is no way contrary to Reaſon,

nor

nor ever the leſs true, becauſe we are ſhort-ſighted ignorant Creatures: For God is Infinite, but we are finite, and therefore cannot apprehend or contain the vaſt Immenſity of his Counſels or Nature. And this Concluſion we may ſafely draw; That ſince all we ſee or know appears ſo wonderful and true, it is reaſonable to believe what yet lies under the Veil, is either unfit for us to know, or too big for our Underſtanding, and reſerved for our Adorations in a State of Glory. We ſhould therefore regulate our Thirſt of Knowledge here, by the Advice of the wiſe *Hebrew*; *Search not the things that are above thy Strength, but what is commanded thee, think thereon with Reverence.* Ecclus iii. 21.

The Sum is: God created Man rational with Faculties to receive and apprehend Truth, which way ſoever communicated: Matters of pure Revelation are immediately from the Inſtruction of God, therefore moſt reaſonable to be believed, becauſe moſt certainly true; but cannot be believed otherwiſe than he has propoſed them, either in manner or degree. From the Inſufficiency of Reaſon to guide us in all Matters relating to our final Good, appears the Neceſſity of Revelation, againſt the Cavils of thoſe who would ſo exalt Nature as to render it altogether needleſs. And the Evidence of its coming from God, manifeſts the Obligation we are under to receive and obey it, againſt the Atheiſtical Objections of thoſe, who would repreſent it as a ſuperſtitious Contrivance or Invention of Men.

When therefore Reaſon refuſes to ſubmit to this Guidance, or aſſent to what has all the inward and external Marks of Truth and infallible Teſtimony; when it will deny, only becauſe it cannot comprehend and fathom the Depths of God with its own ſhort Line; or attempts to give Reaſons, and account for things which God has not thought fitting to explain; then it tranſgreſſes the Bound of

Duty, and inſtead of a Guide becomes a Deceiver and Deſtroyer of thoſe who follow its Directions. Confidence is always dangerous; it has been ever found that the beſt natural Senſe is not ſufficient in human Affairs without Experience; nor in divine ones, without Revelation.

It is this Arrogance, Self-ſufficiency, and exalting Reaſon to an Independency upon God, that has been the Source of all fatal Error and Impiety, and tempted Men to revolt from Religion and from God. Such Oracles of vain Reaſon have all the Doubters and Diſputers againſt Religion been ſince the World began. The more Men have depended upon Reaſon for the meaſure of divine Things, the further always have they erred from the Truth. And what this is owing to, we may learn from the Confeſſion of a noble Author, in the firſt Claſs among the Deſpiſers of Revelation.

Characteriſt. vol. 1. "There is (ſays he) a certain perverſe Humanity "in us, which inwardly reſiſts the divine Commiſ- "ſion, though ever ſo plainly revealed." The Words are ſpoke on a particular Inſtance, but hold true in him with regard to the whole Revelation: There is no want of Evidence in divine Philoſophy; but there is in Man a Pride and over-conceited Opinion of Reaſon, an Affectation of Superiority in Judgment, a Love of Novelty and Singularity, a Pleaſure in oppoſing generally received and eſtabliſhed Truths, together with a petulant inflated libertine Spirit of Unbelief in Man, which, though it diſcerns the Light, will not acknowledge or admit it.

I ſhall add only one Caution more, *viz.* That however perfect Reaſon may be; the Uſe of it, the Ratiocinations of Men, are vaſtly imperfect. Do we not every Day ſee wiſe Men falling into dangerous Errors and Miſtakes? and when their Arguments come to be examined, are found to proceed

on

on looſe uncertain Principles, to uſe fallacious incoherent Ideas, or draw weak or falſe Concluſions. If this be not ſo, whence comes ſo much Controverſy, Oppoſition, and Litigation in all Parts of Knowledge, among the Learned of the World? So that Care muſt be taken not to admit every thing for ſtrict Reaſoning that pretends to be ſo; but rather to ſuſpect what is ſubject to ſo much Abuſe, eſpecially when we find it ſtriving againſt God. For ſuch are the Prejudices of ſome Minds through the Workings of Satan, the ſtrong Power of Deluſion, or the Deceit of Unrighteouſneſs, that they will not believe the Truth, but inſtead thereof a Lye, and have Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs, becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth.

But I willingly omit many Topicks on this Subject, there being ſuch Variety of excellent Treatiſes in the World, that firmly demonſtrate the exact Agreement of Chriſtianity with all the Principles of Reaſon; its Evidences to be ſo plain and direct to the common Apprehenſions of Men, that the more an impartial Mind inquires into its Grounds and Doctrines, the clearer and fuller Satisfaction will he receive; the Certainty of its Revelations, and how fitly we may believe and adore thoſe incomprehenſible Myſteries, which we cannot fully underſtand, and reverence the Exhibition of thoſe glorious Truths, which the bleſſed *Angels deſire to look into.*

I paſs on to conſider the Arguments which are offered in ſupport of Natural Religion: Or that Man by a due Uſe of his Faculties, without the Aid of Revelation, may attain a ſufficient Knowledge of whatever is neceſſary to direct him to the final End of his Being. The principal of which I think are theſe following,

Firſt, The Teſtimony of Scripture.

Secondly, The Contemplation of the Works of God.

Thirdly, The eternal Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things.

CHAP. IV.

Texts of Scripture relating to the Natural Law. Of Natural Religion being learned from the Works of Creation. The Knowledge of God not to be had from the Contemplation of our own Frame. The Deity not diſcoverable from the Fitneſs of Things.

THE firſt Argument, and of the greateſt weight to prove Divine Things (thoſe to which this Inquiry is limited) may be diſcovered by the Light of Nature, is founded on ſome Texts of Scripture; from which it is ſaid we may fairly and with certainty conclude, that though Man has no original Impreſſions of a Deity ſtamped upon his Mind, yet he is endowed with ſuch Faculties, as by a natural Uſe of them he cannot fail to diſcern and know him; for God has not left himſelf without a Witneſs, but provided ſuch abundant Means for this purpoſe, that no one can remain ignorant of him, who carefully attends to them, and eſpecially the Works of Creation. The Magnificence, Order, and Variety of which, the Progreſſion of Cauſes, the neceſſary Series, Connexion, and Dependence of Natural Things, muſt raiſe the Mind to the Contemplation and Acknowledgment of ſome firſt ſelf-originated Cauſe, the Fountain and Author of every other Being. And from this Principle once eſtabliſhed, ſuch Concluſions may be regularly drawn, as will demonſtrate the Neceſſity of thoſe eſſential Properties and Attributes which are inſeparable from his Nature. And that by conſidering the ſeveral Relations we ſtand in to him of Creation, Preſervation, *&c.* we may

may irrefragably infer the various Duties of Worſhip and Adoration we owe to him, and the ſundry Obligations we are under to our ſelves, and one another, which make up the Subſtance of the Moral Law or Religion of Nature.

Were this Suppoſition true, the Law of Nature would ſtand in need of no other Teſtimonies, and I muſt here ſtop the Inquiry. For what the Spirit of God declares, muſt be allowed as full Evidence; there is no room for Doubt, it can receive no higher Demonſtration. But I maintain the preſent Hypotheſis from a full Conviction, that it is beſt conſiſtent with the Attributes of God, the Paſſages of Providence, and the Faculties of the Mind; to be fully ſupported from the Authority of Scripture, and moſt agreeable to the Phænomena of Nature, to Reaſon, and Experience.

The firſt Text I ſhall mention, becauſe conſtantly appealed to on this Occaſion, is that of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, i. 20. But the Apoſtle is here ſo far from aſſerting the Sufficiency of Nature to diſcover the Exiſtence of a Deity, that his very Argument is founded on the Heathens being already convinced of this Truth; and from thence ſhews the Unreaſonableneſs and Impiety of their Idolatry: Which was the firſt Point neceſſary to convince the Heathens of, in order to bring them to a Knowledge of the true God, and juſtify the Almighty's Proceedings, *in giving them up to a reprobate Mind, receiving in themſelves the recompence of their error which is meet*, ver. 27.

"For the firſt Step in Wiſdom is to ſee what is "falſe; and the ſecond, to know the Truth; ſince "whoever diſcerns the one, will be diſpoſed to "receive the other." Lactant. l. 1. p. 109.

Now, it is never denied, that the World once knew the true God, and no other; Him the righteous *Noah* preached to his Sons, and they to their Poſterity; but theſe great Truths were, after the

Diſperſion, ſoon defaced and obliterated. The Nations, as *David* ſays, *Pſal.* ix. 17. *forgat God*; Forgat him whom they had once known, and his true Nature and Eſſence, as if they had never been declared to them. So that there remained only ἐπίνοιαις τίς ἀμαυρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, a certain dusky, obſcure Knowledge of God, the Name of ſuch a Being, and a faint Application of ſome Attributes, which they alſo transferred to Creatures in a Manner abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Divine Nature, which was utterly forgot, and became little more than a Name or empty Sound in the World, being mixed up with ſo many Falſhoods, and applied to ſuch ſacrilegious Purpoſes.

Cl. Alex. Strom. 6. p. 646.

Gods they had innumerable; and therefore the Exiſtence of a Deity is here taken for granted, being a Truth confeſſed by both Parties. Had it been otherwiſe, he would have charged them with Atheiſm, or denying ſuch Exiſtence, not with Superſtition or the Worſhip of many Gods: For the Queſtion which divided the World, was not, whether there were Gods, but what they were, and how to be worſhipped. And this was their Folly, that profeſſing themſelves wiſe, admitting the Exiſtence of the Gods, and ſome kind of Worſhip to be due to them, they ſhould nevertheleſs entertain ſuch falſe Conceptions of both theſe important Points.

And the Apoſtle might here allude to the many excellent Things *Socrates* and others had ſpoken of the Divine Nature, of the ineffable Firſt Good, μηδαμῶς εἶναι ῥητὸν τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαθόν. Yet notwithſtanding this, they erred ſo greatly in the Worſhip due to the Being they deſcribed, and continued in the Belief and Adoration of their Country-Gods, and ſo became Fools: For the wiſeſt of this World, inflated with the Notions of a Deity, taken from their Poets and Philoſophers, haſtned with the Ignorant, and hurried away others to Temples, and Idols, and

Vid. Orig. cont. Celſ. L. 6. p. 276.

the

the Celebration of execrable Myſteries. Had they known the true God, they would have perceived the Abſurdity of ſuch Practice; as they did not, they were Fools in his ſight: And what Man in his Senſes would not deride him who diſcourſes of the Gods in a philoſophical exalted manner, yet immediately betakes himſelf to dumb Statues, converſes with, reverences, and prays to them as Gods, or Repreſentations of them, ὡς θεοῖς, ἢ θεῶν εἰκόσι; or by beholding them as a Symbol, pretends to raiſe his Mind to a Conception of an Intellectual Deity. All theſe things are Falſhoods, and herein *they changed the Truth of God into a Lye.* Orig. Ib. l. 7. p. 362.

For to acknowledge an infinitely Supreme Being, and yet admit more Infinites, or a Crowd of little inferior Gods, *i. e.* no Gods at all, into Partnerſhip with Supremacy, is to common Senſe the greateſt Abſurdity: Or to believe a moſt perfect Being, governing all things with Juſtice and Wiſdom, and on that account the proper Object of Adoration; yet pay divine Worſhip to an Army of Demons and Idols, is ſuch a Contradiction, that the natural Uſe of their Reaſon ſhould have made them deteſt it as irrational. But the Fact was quite otherwiſe; the Harveſt of Deities which ſprang up in *Egypt*, was cultivated in *Greece*, and thence borrowed by the *Romans*, was ſo far from being thought unreaſonable by the latter, that, as *Cotta* ſays, inſtead of confuting, they confirmed all the Fables, by endeavouring to give a proper Meaning and Explanation to them. *Veſtri autem non modo hæc non refellunt, verum etiam confirmant, interpretando quorſum quidque pertineat.* Cic. Nat. D. l. 3. n. 23.

And had they retained, beſides the Name, ſome juſt Apprehenſions of a Deity, and his incommunicable Attributes, it had been impoſſible they ſhould have thus denied them, and change his Glory, the inviſible divine Perfections, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, or Beaſt. That the whole ſhould

ſhould be ſunk into ſuch Madneſs, and Departure from all Underſtanding, as to proſtrate themſelves before a deſpicable ſenſeleſs Piece of Matter, to believe That a God, which they themſelves had formed: To tremble, and fear, and implore Bleſſings from a Bit of Wood, or Stone or Ivory; and fall down before Idols, made (as the ancient Chriſtians ridicul'd them) out of old unclean Veſſels, Pots, Candleſticks, or Cloſe-ſtools, and imagine ſuch baſe things, by paſſing into another Shape, ſhould have Life, and Majeſty, and Divinity conferred on them. This was a Reproach to Reaſon, and the moſt beſotted Darkneſs we can conceive the Minds of Men to be involved in. *Nevertheleſs, the times of this darkneſs God winked at*, Acts xvii. 30. which he would not have done, if every Man by Nature could have attained this Wiſdom, the Knowledge of God, and his Duty to him. But now that a clear Manifeſtation of theſe things is made by the Goſpel, *He commandeth all Men every where to repent, to turn from their Idols, and to ſerve the living God*; for in the Day of Knowledge there will be no Allowance made for Impenitence or Idolatry.

Arnob. L. 6. p. 118, 119.

Ver. 18. *For the Wrath of God* againſt theſe Sins is now fully declared, not by Nature or Reaſon, but *is revealed from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs*, eſpecially the Violations of the Firſt Table, giving divine Honour to what by Nature is not God, *and Unrighteouſneſs of Men*, their impious and immoral Practices, *who hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*, by acting maliciouſly againſt thoſe common Notions they had of it. It is alſo Righteouſneſs and Juſtice to give every one their Due, but they gave to the Creature what belonged to the Creator only; and ſo committed a double Sin, not only robbed him of his Honour, but, as it were in reproach to him, transferred it to another.

Ver. 19.

Ver. 19. *Becauſe that which may be known of God*, as much as was neceſſary and ſufficient for their preſent Circumſtances, concerning his Eſſence, Attributes, or Will, *is manifeſt in them*, or (as the Margin and others read it) to them, or among them, not indeed from Nature and Reaſon, *for God hath ſhewed it unto them*, ἐφανέρωσε, the Word expreſly denotes a poſitive Act of God, who brought to light, made manifeſt and evident that which was dark, obſcure and unknown before, by the ſundry Ways he thought proper to reveal and make himſelf known to us. Vid. Orig. cont. Celſ. l. 3. p. 140.

Ver. 20. *For* (γὰρ, *nam*, *ſiquidem*, foraſmuch as) *the inviſible things of him*, his Eternal Power and Godhead, as afterwards explained, *from*, not ἐκ, but ἀπὸ ever ſince, *the Creation of the World*, when they were fully communicated, *are clearly ſeen*, becauſe after a Declaration of his Nature and Exiſtence, the divine Attributes are plainly evinced, *being underſtood*, νοούμενα, explained to the Underſtanding, *by the things that are made*, ποιήμασι, the Works of God, or things which he had done, not only of Creation but of Providence, in the Deluge, in the wonderful Preſervation of his Church, and Deſtruction of his Enemies, in his many Appearances, Miracles, and Interpoſitions with Mankind, which through all Ages had been related to them, and were a ſenſible Demonſtration of Omniſcience, Omnipotence, Inviſibility, and Immateriality; *even his Eternal Power and Godhead*, which alone could effect ſuch wonderful things. *So that they*, who had ſuch Aids and Notices, might, through thoſe Mediums, have made that diſcernible to the Mind, which was not viſible to the Eye, and known they were the Works, not of viſible Cauſes, but an inviſible Agent; which they did not, and therefore *are without Excuſe*: And the more ſo, becauſe thoſe very Works, which, from their Stupendouſneſs, ſhould have taught them the Great-

Greatneſs of the former, were the Occaſion of their paying that Homage to the Thing made, which could be due to the Worker only. They ſtopped here, adored the Univerſe as the one great God, and the Sun and Moon, as its principal Parts, and the Authors of Life; but never conſidered nor thought of that inviſible Power and Godhead, which was neceſſary to produce ſuch aſtoniſhing Beings; therefore they did not admire or adore the Creator, nor ever lifted their Minds beyond what was material and viſible. This is ſo true, that even *Porphyry* owned, the Heathens never once dreamed of any incorporeal Nature or inviſible Power to be the Former of the World; and that the early *Egyptians*, *Phœnicians*, and *Greeks* had no other Gods but Heaven, and the Heavenly Bodies, *Plato*, *Diodorus Siculus*, and *Plutarch* abundantly teſtify. In this conſiſted the great original Difference between the true and falſe Religion, that tho' the Heathens owned Man to be formed for the Contemplation of Heaven, yet they adored only what was viſible in Heaven, worſhipped the Univerſe without enquiring for its Creator, and held the Sun as God, without conſidering or knowing the Framer of it.

Euſeb. Præp. l. 3. c. 4.

V. Theodoret. Ser. 3. p. 42.

Vid. Cl. Alexand. Admonit. p. 42.

Ver. 21. *Becauſe that when they knew God*, who had ſufficiently manifeſted himſelf, *they glorified him not as God*, either in the Suitableneſs of their Notions, or Purity of their Worſhip. *Neither were they thankful* for the many Bleſſings received, eſpecially their Attainments in Knowledge, which they attributed to their own Sagacity and Wiſdom, and by not attending to what had been revealed, *became vain in their Imaginations*, διαλογισμοῖς, philoſophical Diſcourſes and Reaſonings, which conſtantly led them into Error, and could never find out or explain one Truth; but in truſting to their Reaſon, they diſputed themſelves out of the Knowledge of Divine Things, *and their fooliſh Heart was darkned*, had

had ſo far extinguiſhed the Light which God had given them, as not to be able to comprehend thoſe diſtinguiſhing Perfections by which he had revealed himſelf; but placed Nature, or a monſtrous Plurality, in his ſtead; that like the Eyes of the Blind, they could not ſee the Sun ſhining in its full ſtrength, but the very Light which enables us to diſcern Objects, dazzled them the more.

Ver. 22. Thus *profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe*, in underſtanding the abſtruſeſt Myſteries, whether of the Nature of God, or the Cauſes of Things, *they became Fools*, by giving ſo abſurd and falſe an Explication of them. For the Proficiency they had made in human Sciences, made them daring to explain divine ones, and by depending on Reaſon for their Guide, fell into horrid Corruptions of Truth, and the moſt deteſtable Idolatries. The Wiſdom of the World was entirely confined to ſenſible things, attributed all Excellencies to Body or Matter, and affirmed, that beſides that there was nothing, whether it be called inviſible or incorporeal. All their fictitious Deities were Parts of the Creation; and there cannot be greater Ignorance or Madneſs than to adore ſuch inſtead of God, the Creator and Cauſe of all things viſible and inviſible. This is the Charge the Apoſtle has been drawing up againſt them, that notwithſtanding the Means of Knowledge God had afforded, they were converſant only περὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα, καὶ τὰ ἱδρύματα, καὶ περὶ τὰ δημιουργήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ, *about Images and Statues, and the Works of God, but did not lift up their Mind to God.*

Vid. Orig. cont. Celſ. L. 3. p. 140.

Id. L. 6. p. 321.

Id. L. 5. p. 255.

Ver. 23. *For they changed the Glory of the uncorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Men, and to Birds, and four-footed Beaſts, and creeping Things.* Now to change is to put one thing for another, and ſo they did with God; they excluded him from his Place, and attributed his Glory, his Supereminence and Power to material Beings, the Uni-

Univerſe as the firſt God, and to all its Parts, even the vileſt Reptiles, as Portions of that God. This was their Guilt, and thus to err from the Truth, was the higheſt Unreaſonableneſs and Folly; not only in ſuppoſing ſuch deſpicable Things to be proper Repreſentatives of the unſullied Splendours of the Deity; but alſo in blaſpheming that holy Name, which they ſtill retained, and had once been taught to reverence; by applying it to, and calling ſtupid Idols of their own making, their Gods and Saviours. Τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας θεὸς καὶ σωτῆρας ὠνόμασαν.

Theodoret, Serm. 3. p. 41. Origen. contra Celſ. L. 3. p. 157.

Ver. 25. *Who changed the Truth of God into a Lye*; in the ſtead of his eternal unchangeable Nature, they placed an Idol, a Falſhood, a Vanity, a Nothing. It is true there is a God, it is a Lye that Nature which they worſhipped is God. It is true that God is to be worſhipped, it is a Lye to give this divine Honour to a Creature. It was impoſſible that a Creature ſhould be God; but this Truth they converted into a Lye, by giving Adoration to it, and making that God, which was not ſo: *For they worſhipped and ſerved the Creature*, τῇ κτίσει, which may be alſo rendered, *The Creation*, or *Univerſe*, to which in the earlieſt Ages Divine Adorations were paid, *more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever*; and every Creature is temporary, and has no Bleſſings but from him. Hereby they changed the Truth of the Divine Nature into a Falſhood, by invoking Statues and Creatures as Gods, οἱ τοῖς ἀψύχοις ὡς θεῷ προσλαλοῦντες;—καὶ ὡς θεοῖς τοῖς ἀγάλμασιν ἢ τοῖς ζώοις προσκυνοῦντες, and thereby violated and altered all the Peculiarities of the Godhead.

Orig. con Celſ. L. 3. p. 157.

Ver. 28. The Apoſtle then ſhews them the moral Guilt of their Apoſtaſy, ver. 28. *That they did not like to retain God in their Knowledge.* They had known him, and might have retained him, but they liked it not, nor would attend to what was revealed:

vealed: But they choſe rather to depend on their own corrupted Reaſon and Imaginations, to guide them in and to theſe ſupernatural Truths; and by that means quickly loſt Sight, and all right Underſtanding of the Divine Perfections, and that Practical Obedience which was congruous to them. This was an Act of their Judgment and Will, they rejected God in their Minds; and *for this Cauſe* he judicially rejected them, left them to themſelves, *gave them over to a reprobate Mind*, and the Guidance of their own vain Wiſdom, which they had placed in the Throne of God. But it was ἀδόκιμον, *perverſe*, and contrary to right Reaſon, and ſoon hurried them into Idolatry and Brutality, *to do thoſe things which are not convenient*, and notwithſtanding all their boaſted Morality, to commit and approve the moſt prodigious Immoralities, and filthy Impurities; many of which the Apoſtle enumerates, eſpecially thoſe of Uncleanneſs, vile Affections, and diſhonouring their own Bodies between themſelves, to which the Philoſophers were incredibly addicted. *Qui ſe ſapientes nominant, volutando ſe cum pueris in modum nefarium, maſculi in maſculos patrantes turpitudinem.* Which *Chryſoſtome* on this Place obſerves, was not only permitted by the wiſeſt Nation in the World, the *Athenians*, but by *Solon*, the greateſt among them; nor practiſed by the Vulgar only, but by the moſt divine *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Xenophon*, *Cebes* and others, as ſhall be ſhewed in its proper Place. Orig. cont. Celſ. L. 7. p. 365.

From the whole it is obſervable, that the Apoſtle charges them with Ingratitude, or not making a ſuitable Return for Aids received, in not glorifying God according to the Knowledge they had of him, and which might have carried them to juſter Apprehenſions. That they did not ſo, was no Fault in God, who had revealed his Exiſtence, and manifeſted his Perfections to them; nor of Nature which exhibited

ſo

ſo many Wonders, in Power, Wiſdom, Beauty and Order, which vaſtly tranſcend the Mind of Man, the higheſt Work of God in this World, and ſhould therefore have directed them to its moſt omnipotent Architect the Creator of Man, and Ruler of the Univerſe; yet they either wilfully ſhut their Eyes and ſtopped their Ears againſt theſe loud and clear Declarations; or, if they did attend to them, it was only to debaſe and diſguiſe the Truth, by mixing ſo many Falſhoods and wicked Deluſions with it, that they were carried about with their own Superſtition, as with the raging Waves of the Sea, perpetually fluctuating in Doubt, Ignorance and Error, giving the divine Worſhip of the only God to dead Men, or the ſeveral Parts of Nature; which Stubbornneſs and Ingratitude rendred them totally inexcuſable, in being thus ignorant of God, whom they had ſufficient Means of knowing, and proſtituting his Honour to the vileſt and moſt ſenſeleſs Idolatries.

And then the Apoſtle juſtifies the Dealings of God with Men: they rejected the Knowledge of God, his Manifeſtations, and all the Means he offered; and therefore, as Puniſhment ought to bear proportion with Guilt, he in Judgment relinquiſhed them; after which judicial Dereliction, they became Slaves to their own Luſts and vile Affections; all their Reaſon, their Wiſdom and Philoſophy, when deſtitute of Divine Aid, proved blind, reprobate, and curſed.

Nor was there a ſingle Heathen, who confeſſed a Deity, exempt from this Crimination of holding the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs. Sins againſt Knowledge are of the deepeſt Dye: and if *Socrates* or *Plato* knew (as ſome conceit) the true God, it was an Aggravation of their Crime; they were the guiltieſt of Men, to join in the Superſtition of the Age, hold Communion with Demons and Devils, or extend the ſame Honours equally to them and the

the Supreme Being. Surely they were ignorant of the firſt Thing which ought to be known, That Piety, Worſhip, and Sacrifice are due to him only; That no bleſſed or immortal Being beſides him is capable of Adoration: Yet no Man adores what he does not eſteem as God, and to adore a falſe God, is blaſphemouſly to violate the Nature of the true one. Had they known God, they would have glorified him as ſuch, and not joined in a Communion ſo irrational, its Myſteries ſo abominable, its Rites and Ceremonies ſo unbecoming and impious, that they could only proceed from the Suggeſtions of the Devil: The whole of their Religion was from him, none but ſo bad a Maſter being capable of teaching, or being pleaſed with it: Had they known God, they would not have been the Authors of Sin to others, by their Inſtruction, or Example to the Multitude, nor baſely out of Fear connived at eſtabliſhed Impieties; but have boldly confeſſed that the bleſſed Immortals above, and we wretched Mortals upon Earth, are bound to the Adoration of one only, the God of Gods.

The ſame Method of Argumentation appears in all St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſes with the Gentiles. He does not go about to prove the Exiſtence of a Deity, becauſe that was a Point confeſſed; and conſequently does not tell them, they might come to the Knowledge of it, by conſidering the Greatneſs of God's Works, or by any other Method: But he conſtantly infers, that, by theſe Means, they who acknowledged his Exiſtence, might have learned to worſhip him as God, and be thankful. That the Heavens and the Earth, the Variety of Seaſons; and the numberleſs Bleſſings we enjoy, are clear Teſtimonies of his Majeſty, Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs: That no other can be the Object of Religious Adoration, and that to place it elſewhere is Ingratitude and Idolatry.

This was the End of his Reaſoning with the People of *Lyſtra*, who were ſo far from Atheiſm that they believed the Apoſtles to be Gods come down to them in the Likeneſs of Men, and would have ſacrificed to them as ſuch; and conſequently wanted no Information to believe their Exiſtence, or that Worſhip was due to them: But of the true God, and that Service which would be acceptable to him, they were totally ignorant.

The Subſtance therefore of his Preaching was, *that they ſhould turn from theſe Vanities*, the giving Divine Honours to mere Creatures, *unto the living God*, not to dumb Idols, or to dead Men, whom they had conſecrated, and imagined to be of the ſame corporeal Shape with themſelves; but to that eternal Firſt Cauſe *which made Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all Things that are therein*, the wonderful Glories of which declare the Wiſdom and Omnipotence of him that formed them: And though his Nature be inviſible, *Nevertheleſs he left not himſelf without Witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with food and gladneſs*: Which Inſtances of his Bounty ſhould diſpoſe us to give Thanks to him alone, who is the Author and Giver of every Bleſſing.

So that in St. *Paul*'s Senſe the Book of Nature did not reveal God; but was a noble Teſtimony to the Revelation when made; and proved the Neceſſity of thoſe Divine Perfections Mankind had been inſtructed in, though they remained inviſible. But as Rain falling on the Deſert does not render it fruitful, no more did the Means of Knowledge reached out to the World, ſerve to improve them in that true Wiſdom, for which they were intended.

They knew there was a Deity, and the beholding the Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of an Infinite

finite inviſible Being, ſhining from the whole Univerſe, ſhould have diſpelled the Darkneſs of their Minds, and led them to a Confeſſion and Knowledge of him. But inſtead of raiſing their Conceptions from the viſible Wonders of Nature, to an Acknowledgment of the inviſible Glory and Perfection of the great Author of them; they ſtopped ſhort, and could not diſtinguiſh between the Power and Virtue which was from God, and that which is in God. But from obſerving the Order and Harmony of Nature, they concluded that Nature was God; and thence began to pay Divine Worſhip to its ſeveral Parts, though inſenſible, as Gods. This was the Error, he would turn them from: *And though in Times paſt God ſuffered all Nations to walk in their own Ways*, ver. 16. yet if for the future they did not ſerve the living God, and him only, they would be without excuſe.

There is another famous Paſſage of St. *Paul*, ſo conſtantly appealed to, in the Queſtion before us, that it muſt be particularly examined; I mean his Sermon at *Athens*, in *Acts* xvii. And the better to know the Force of the Apoſtle's Arguments, we muſt obſerve againſt whom he particularly oppoſes them, *viz.* the *Epicureans* and *Stoicks*, two of the moſt prevailing Sects of Philoſophers in the World, and their Doctrines moſt oppoſite to Truth, the Nature of God, and the Intent of the Goſpel.

Antipater in *Plutarch*, gives a ſummary but juſt Character of them, ὁ μὲν γὰρ τὸ συποιητικὸν, ὁ δὲ τὸ ἄφθαρτον ἀφαιρεῖται τῶν Θεῶν, *The one took away the Goodneſs, the other the Eternity of the Gods.* The firſt denied a Providence, that the World was made by God, or that there was any Government of it, but by Chance and Fortune, and taught that the Gods were of human Shape. The other held all things ſubject to Fate, that the World was Stoic. Repug. p. 1052.

a God, that Matter was eternal, and the Gods corporeal and corruptible, φθαρτοὶ, that their Bodies were a Subſtance mutable, alterable, and changeable into every thing. And that theſe Bodies were in the Likeneſs of Men, was the conſtant Opinion of *Egypt* and *Greece*, through all the Ages of Idolatry. And *Cicero* enquiring into the Form of the Gods, makes *Velleius* aſſign this as a Reaſon for it, becauſe they never appeared otherwiſe. Nature, ſays he, teaches us, that they are of human Shape, ſeeing all Nations repreſent them in that Form, nor do they occur to any Man ſleeping or waking in any other Shape: and therefore the Apoſtle enforces this Truth, ver. 29. *That we ought not to think that the Godhead is like to Gold or Silver, or Stone, graven by Art and Man's Device.*

Vid. Orig. cont. Celſ l. 3. p. 156.

Nat. D. l. 1. n. 34.

But another great and fundamental Error of Paganiſm, which the Apoſtle here oppoſes, and what had proved the ſtrongeſt Foundation to Idolatry, was, that God neither did nor could create the World; which at once ſtripped the Deity of his moſt glorious Perfections, and at the ſame time ſhews the Vanity of that Argument, that Reaſon can diſcover God in and by his Works. Whereas not a Perſon in the World ever ſo much as dreamed of a Creator, and therefore Creation could never lead us to him. *Diodorus Siculus*, when he ſums up the Opinions concerning the Origin of the World, never gives a hint of ſuch an Artificer, neither mentions, nor thought of the Name of God. *Porphyry*, who may be allowed as an impartial Witneſs in this Caſe, affirms the ſame, That it had never entered into the Mind of any Man, that an incorporeal Nature ſhould be the Former of the World. And *Euſebius* appeals to the Heathens, when he declares, "That no Nation of the World, "the Jews excepted, did look upon God as the "Creator of the Univerſe." There was not one Philoſopher

Vid. Euſeb. Præp. l. 1. c. 8.

Id. l. 3. c. 4.

Id. l. 7. c. 3.

Philoſopher who believed that God made it, but either that it was eternal, or its Matter coeval with God; or that the Univerſe, the τὸ πᾶν, was the Supreme God, before which nothing exiſted. The Stoicks eſpecially maintained the τὸ ὅλον, to be the firſt πρώτον, and principal God: Which indeed was the Catholick Faith of Paganiſm.

This is the Reaſon why the Scriptures diſtinguiſh the true God from falſe ones, by the Power of Creation, more than any other Attribute, as containing ſuch various Proofs of the divine Exiſtence and Perfections. To this *Moſes* and the Prophets every where appeal, and *David* thus characteriſes him, *Pſal.* xcvi. 5. *All the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens.* This St. *Paul* every where inſiſts upon as the fulleſt Evidence he could bring againſt the Heathens, who ſo ſacrilegiouſly robbed God of his very Eſſence, his Power and Godhead, *Rom.* i. 20. To the Men of *Lyſtra* he gives this Deſcription of the Living God, *Acts* xiv. 15. that *he made Heaven and Earth*, &c. and here to the *Athenians*, ver. 23. The unknown God whom he preached and declared to them, was no other than this ſame God, *that made the World, and all things therein.*

So both Jews and Chriſtians, in Oppoſition to Heatheniſm, always defined God by this Prerogative, in ſuch like Forms, ὁ τῶν ὅλων Θεὸν, *the God of all things.* And οὐδὲν ἄλλο σέβουσιν, ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεὸν, ὃς ἐποίησε τὸν οὐρανὸν, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα, *the Chriſtians worſhipped no other than the God over all, who made Heaven, and all other things.* And when they would ſpeak ſo as not to leave room for any Exception, it was ſufficient to ſay, Θεὸν εἶναι τὸν Κύριον πάντων, *that God is the Lord of all things.* This was a kind of Teſt in Religion: The Heathens diſavowed it, and whoever held ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων Θεὸν, *that God was the Maker of all things*, was guilty of Hereſy, and ſtood under the Correction of *Ariſtotle* and the Philoſophers.

Orig. cont. Celſ. Id. l. 5. p. 234.

Clem. Alex. Strom. 6. p. 680. Id. Strom. 5. p. 589.

As therefore the Apoſtle's Intent was to turn his Hearers to the Knowledge and Service of the Living God; in order to this it was neceſſary to convince them of his Supereminence above others: And no Argument could carry a fuller Conviction of this Truth than what he offers. The Application to them was, Obſerve the Difference between theſe Deities; you confeſs your Gods unable to create the World, and you hold either that, or the Matter whereof it is compoſed, to be Eternal, and worſhip the Heavenly Bodies, or Corporeal Deities, or dead Idols, the Work of Mens Hands.

We teach and believe in one living God, ſpiritual in his Nature, ſupreme in his Dignity, who by his Power made the Heavens and the Earth, and all things therein, who governs the whole by a wiſe ſteady Providence, gives Life to every Being, and is the Author of every Bleſſing. The Greatneſs and Order of theſe Works which you behold, are the nobleſt Atteſtations of thoſe infinite Perfections we aſcribe to him, in Power, Wiſdom, Inviſibility, *&c.* He that made all things, muſt be himſelf unmade, ſelf-exiſting; he that created the World, muſt be omnipotent; he that contrived and governs it, infinite in Wiſdom and Goodneſs, *&c.* Theſe render him the only proper Object of Adoration; and it is reaſonable for us to give it, that we may thereby obtain his Grace and Favour, under whoſe Protection and Diſpoſal we are.

But the Apoſtle had juſt Reaſon to oppoſe theſe prevailing Sects on many other Accounts; for they were of all others the greateſt Enemies to Chriſtianity, which taught Men to attain true Beatitude thro' the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace, and the Mediation of an all-ſufficient Redeemer. Whereas the Stoicks preſumptuouſly boaſted, that Man by his own Virtue (though they deſtroyed all Virtue in denying the Freedom of Will and Liberty of Choice)

Choice) could attain Happineſs: That their wiſe Men came no way ſhort of *Jupiter*: That they owed nothing to God for their Wiſdom; nor could *Jupiter* do more than a good Man. Such were their proud ſwelling Words; they made their own Virtue their God, which was the moſt curſed Piece of Carnal-Mindedneſs and Idolatry. And from this poiſonous Root of ſpiritual Pride, Pelagianiſm ſprang up in After-ages. Gale. pt. 2. 433. l. 4. c. 3. Id. pt. 2: 434.

So of the *Epicureans*: They took from the immortal Gods both Aſſiſtance and Grace. *Diis immortalibus & opem & gratiam ſuſtulit*, ſays *Cicero*; and whilſt they affirmed the Nature of God to be moſt excellent, denied to him what muſt be eſſential to the beſt and moſt excellent Nature. They denied a Providence, affirmed the World was not made by God; that in this Life there was no Good, but what was ſenſible; that the Soul was not immortal; and that after Death there were neither Rewards nor Puniſhments. Such a Blaſphemy of God, ſuch a Deſtruction of all Religion, ſo debauched and vain were theſe Sects of Philoſophy, as if they endeavoured to eradicate all Fear and Reverence, nay the very Notion of a Supreme Being out of the World; that it is no wonder the Apoſtle encounters them in an eſpecial Manner. Nat. D. l. 1. c. 43. Gale. Ib. 446, 447.

And ſo ſuperſtitiouſly mad was the whole World, that there were more Gods than Men in it: Tho' they worſhipped all kinds of Creatures as Gods, the Beaſts in the Field, the Fiſhes in the Sea, the Birds in the Air, and the Plants in the Garden; yet, leſt they ſhould miſs ſome one or other, they erected Altars *to the Unknown God, and Gods*. From this particular Superſtition, St. *Paul* takes an opportunity to inſtruct the *Athenians* in the Nature of the true God, who ſeemed the only one unknown to them.

Ver. 22. *I perceive*, ſays he, *that in all things ye are too ſuperſtitious*, more addicted to the Worſhip

of Gods or Demons, than other Cities. *For as I paſſed by, and beheld your Devotions*, your Worſhip, or Deities, your Idols or Dæmons, which they called Gods, for ſo the Word σέβασμα ſignifies, not the Worſhip itſelf, but that which is worſhipped, and is ſo uſed by the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom*, xiv. 20. who mentioning the Carving of Idols, ſays, *they took him now for* σέβασμα, *a God.* St. *Paul*, 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 4. θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, *God, or any thing that is worſhipped*, not the Worſhip. Among which falſe Deities, *I found an Altar with this Inſcription, To the Unknown God*, a God not yet come to their Knowledge; *Whom therefore you ignorantly worſhip*, ἀγνοοῦντες, not knowing what he is, *him declare I unto you*, and reſtore the venerable Name to God that made the World and all the things therein, hitherto unknown amongſt you, *ſeeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, and dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*; for he that is infinite in Power, and immenſe in his Nature, cannot be confined in Temples, or Statues, or Shrines, as the Heathens thought their Gods were, like Birds in a Cage, by a kind of magical Conſecration: *Neither is worſhipped with Mens Hands*, by Images, or other Repreſentations of human Make, *as tho' he needed any thing, ſeeing he giveth to all Life and Breath, and all things*; and therefore can want nothing from them who receive all things from him.

Ὃν οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε.

Ver. 26. *And hath made of one Blood*, from *Adam* and *Noah*, *all Nations of Men to dwell on all the Face of the Earth, and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation.* By the Counſel of his own Wiſdom he hath diſpoſed and upheld the Race of Men in Times and Seaſons, in their ſeveral Bounds and Poſſeſſions, not by any rigid Fate, as the Stoicks held, but by an unerring, juſt and bountiful Providence. And thence perſuades them,

Ver.

Ver. 27. *That they ſhould ſeek the Lord*, this God that made the World, *if haply*, by chance, as Men blind, or in the dark grope after things, *they might feel after him, and find him*, which therefore, after all their painful Searches after Wiſdom, they had not hitherto done; though the Manifeſtations of him, in the Effects of his Preſence and Power, are not remote from our Obſervations; *though* (καιτοι, *quamquam, quia*, becauſe) *he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our Being*; it being eſſential to a Creature as ſuch, to have its whole Dependence upon God.

As certain alſo of your own Poets have ſaid, For we alſo are his Offſpring, of Jehovah the Unknown God; not *Jove*, to whom *Aratus* the Poet ignorantly attributed the Government of the World. And if Man, the principal Work of the lower Creation, be of God's forming, the Apoſtle's Concluſion muſt neceſſarily follow, *That we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Man's Art or Device:* It being unreaſonable to think the Artificer is not more excellent than what he forms: And for the ſame reaſon, that the Gods are in the ſhape of Men, who are ſo far removed from, and inferior to Divinity; and above all, it is moſt irrational for Man, the Offſpring of God, to worſhip an Idol of his own making, for and inſtead of God.

From the whole we may infer, that the wiſer of theſe blind *Grecians* knew there was a God, but what or who he was, they never knew; nor where to find, nor what to make of him; but thought him either *Saturn*, or *Jupiter*, or the Sun, or any thing but what he really was: Nor with all their natural or acquired Wiſdom could they attain any right Idea or Notion of God, what he was, or where to be found.

And

And if at *Athens*, the Eye of the World, the Miſtreſs of Learning, the School of Wiſdom and of Nature, they were totally ignorant of the true God, it cannot be expected that other Nations ſhould be acquainted with him; nor that the Light of Nature, Philoſophy, or the Diſquiſitions of the moſt elevated Minds, ſhould be ſufficient for theſe things; if God was unknown to them, who were moſt capable (without a divine Aid) of knowing him, yet they continued blind, and groping in the dark to no purpoſe.

Herbert Relig. Gentil. c. 13. p. 267.

This has brought ſuch Difficulties on ſome modern Schemes, that they who undertake the Defence of Paganiſm, and muſt not allow them to be ignorant of the true God; becauſe if they did, their whole Syſtem, calculated to oppoſe Revelation, would fall to the Ground; cannot help ſtumbling at this Objection, and grant that the Heathens had but very lame and imperfect Notions of the Supreme God: That the Rays of the Divinity were intercepted by a dark Cloud, and the Minds of Men involved in a profound Ignorance; yet being inſtructed by the Book of Nature, they arrived to the Knowledge of the Supreme God, but not the God of the Jews, becauſe he was unknown to them, and it would be a little ſtrain'd to ſuppoſe this unknown Deity to be the God of *Iſrael*. Such lame and imperfect Notions of a God very well indeed correſpond with an unknown God; and the true God was always *Deus incertus*. But why ſhould we ſuppoſe St. *Paul* preached two Supreme Beings, one to the Gentiles, another to the Jews? He had been taught to believe one only, the Creator of Heaven and Earth; and by this Character he diſtinguiſhes him to the *Athenians*. He is teaching them to receive the God of the Jews, but as manifeſted under the Goſpel through Jeſus Chriſt: *Becauſe he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World with Righte-*

Id. 269.

Righteouſneſs by that Man whom he hath ordained: Whereof he hath given Aſſurance to all Men, Gentiles as well as Jews, *in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* They had not a Deity, but what was a δαιμων, and from this δεισιδαιμονία, *Superſtition towards Demons,* he endeavours to convert them, and for their Encouragement adds, Ver. 30. *The Times of this Ignorance* (of him and his Worſhip) *God winked at.*

There are indeed Men of great Learning, who conclude, that the Apoſtle here plainly confeſſes their worſhipping of the true God. But how does the Argument ſtand? He was unknown to them, therefore they knew him. They worſhipped him ignorantly, without knowing whom or how to do it; therefore they worſhipped the true God. And thus by the Light of Nature diſcovered, they knew not what, that is, nothing at all, an ignorant Worſhip for an unknown God; they found in the dark what they never ſaw or felt: And thus Knowledge and Ignorance are the ſelf-ſame thing. Voſſ. Idol. l. 1. c. 2.

But the Apoſtle's Intention is evident: The Altar confeſſed their Worſhip of an unknown God, which was the Exceſs of Ignorance and Superſtition; but whence they might be convinced, that a God unknown to them or their Fathers, might yet be a God to be worſhipped. He lays hold on this Occaſion, to declare what God was unknown to them, and perſuade them to worſhip him only, *viz.* The God that made the World and all Things therein, which was a Deity, that neither *Egypt* nor *Athens* before that time had ever heard of: And this was no more than what St. *Paul* every where repeats and affirms, that οὐκ ἔγνω ὁ κόσμος, *he was a God whom the World did not know,* 1 Cor. i. 21. And to the *Galatians* iv. 8. οὐκ εἰδότες Θεὸν, *that they knew not God,* &c. which are a plain Comment on the

Vid. Hammond of Superſtition, vol. 1. p. 245.

the unknown God of the *Athenians*, and the Truth is, they knew not the true God of Heaven.

Though if ever the *Greeks* came near the true Knowledge and Name of the Supreme God, it was under that of *Zeus Sabazius*, the moſt rational Derivation of which, is from the *Hebrew Iſebaoth*, or *Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hoſts: Which however *Ariſtophanes* took notice of as a ſtrange and foreign God, lately crept in amongſt them, and who ought to be baniſhed out of *Greece*.

But what may properly be inferred from this Paſſage, in behalf of Natural Religion, we may ſafely take from one who was willing and (if ever any were) able, to eſtabliſh it on a ſure and ſolid Foundation; the great Dr. *Clarke* in a Diſcourſe on theſe very Words; "*Athens*, ſays he, was at that "time the Seat of Learning in *Greece*, the great "Reſort of Philoſophers of all Sects, and of the "ableſt and moſt accompliſhed Men in every part "of Literature. Whatever the Light of Nature "or Reaſon, aſſiſted with all the Helps of acqui-"red Learning, could poſſibly diſcover concerning "the Nature of God and of true Religion, might "naturally have been expected to be met with "here. Here, if in any part of the World, it "was reaſonable to imagine, might have been "found Numbers of Men free from the Contagi-"on of thoſe groſs Superſtitions and abſurd Idola-"tries, which had overſpread the ignorant and "unlearned World. But on the contrary, in fact, "it appears from this Hiſtory of St. *Paul*, and "from the agreeing Account, which all other an-"cient Writers give us of this Matter; that this "School of Reaſon and Philoſophy, this eminent "Seat of Learning, was it ſelf as deeply overwhelm-"ed, and buried in Superſtition and Idolatry, as "any other Part of the leſs learned World. The "obvious Inference from which Obſervation, is,

Vol. 2. Serm. 33. p. 217.

"the

" the Uſefulneſs and Neceſſity of Revelation: For " how true ſoever it be (as moſt true and certain " it is) that the Principles of true Religion are per- " fectly agreeable to Nature and Reaſon, and may " even demonſtrably be deduced from thence by " irreſiſtible Arguments; yet ſo it was, that few " or none of theſe moſt learned Philoſophers, ei- " ther themſelves ſaw and traced this Light of " Reaſon and Truth, or dared to diſcover and re- " commend it to others. From whence it evi- " dently appears, that thoſe right Notions concern- " ing God and the natural Obligations of Religi- " on, which are now ſo plain and obvious in Rea- " ſon, that they are urged by many as an Argu- " ment againſt the Needfulneſs of any Revelation " at all, are themſelves generally borrowed from the " Light of Revelation, even by thoſe who uſe " them as an Argument againſt it."

Can any thing more abundantly prove the Inſufficiency of Reaſon, notwithſtanding all the external Aids of the Book of Nature, and the Fitneſs of things? And when we find theſe great Defenders and Ornaments of Reaſon, making ſuch Retreats as are utterly inconſiſtent with the boaſted Powers of it; will it not juſtify others in endeavouring to ſatisfy their Minds, and account for theſe Truths by different Means of Knowledge, wherein there may be no Darkneſs or Perplexity, but ſomething obvious, rational, and certain?

But there are ſeveral Paſſages in this Sermon that deſerve a more particular Conſideration, as being conſtantly uſed to ſhew how far human Learning can teach any Place or People the Divine Truths of God. *Athens* had been long the Seat of Wiſdom, where it had been carried to its higheſt Elevation, and was for many Ages looked upon as the School of Learning and Religion for the reſt

of

of the World. Whence ſuch pompous Epithets were given to it by *Euripides*, Ελλάδος Ελλας, the *Greece* of *Greece*; by *Diodorus*, Κοινὸν πάντων ἀνθρώπων παιδευτήριον; by *Thucydides*, παίδευσις Ελλάδος; by *Strabo*, σοφῶν οἰκητήριον; and by the *Spartans*, one of the Eyes of *Greece*.

Vid. Athen. p. 178.

Juſtin. l 5. c. 8.

But as *Dæmon*-Worſhip was the Offſpring of vain Philoſophy and Reaſoning, *Rom.* i. 21. ſo wherever theſe flouriſhed moſt, there did Idolatry alſo; human Sciences, and ſpiritual Blindneſs growing up equally together, which was the State of *Athens*, and what raiſed the Apoſtle's Indignation, Ver. 16. when he ſaw the City wholly given to Idolatry, κατείδωλον, full of Idols and Altars. The Idol was an Object of Adoration; and the Altar, a Witneſs that what it was erected to, was a God, and that they took the Idol or Statue for a God. *Ara eſt, quæ teſtatur, pro Numine id haberi cui erigitur. Nam illi (ſcilicet Ethnici) quòd Numen habeant, & pro Numine accipiant illam ſtatuam, ara teſtatur. Quid illic faciat ara, ſi illud non habeatur pro Numine, &c.* And at *Athens* there were numberleſs Statues of the ſame God, as of *Mercury*. They were in every Street and Lane, ſays *Plutarch*.

Auguſtin Tom. 10. Ser. 6.

Vid. Alcibiad. Diod. Sic. l. 13. c. 1.

The firſt Altar at *Athens* was built by *Cecrops* the *Egyptian*, where they ſo prodigiouſly multiplied, that *Pauſanias* who took an accurate Survey of the Country, ſays there were more of theſe εἴδωλα, Images and Altars there, than in all *Greece* beſide; they were fond of ſtrange Gods, yet worſhipped no one without an Image to repreſent him. It was the Cuſtom of the *Greeks*, ſays *Maximus Tyrius*, to worſhip the Gods in the pureſt Matter, of human Shape, and with the moſt exquiſite Art. Theſe increaſed to ſo exceſſive a Number, that *Athens* was called the Country and Shop of the Gods; and *Xenophon* complained that they had made the whole City but one Altar. *Cicero* calls it,

Euſeb. pr. l. 10. c. 9. p. 486. Attic.

Diſſert. 38.

Urbs

Urbs fanorum repleta, a City crammed with Temples; and one in *Petronius* obſerved, our Country is ſo filled with Deities, that you may eaſier find a God than a Man; and it was truly the *Pantheon* of the World, having one Temple in common to all the Gods. De Rep. Athen. De Aruſp. Reſponſ. Pauſan. Attic.

Hence the Oracle might well call *Athens*, τὴν κοινὴν ἑστίαν τῆ Ἑλλάδος, the common Altar of *Greece*; *Sophocles* ſtiles it the ſacred Building of the Gods; as *Hegeſias* did *Attica*, the Work of the Gods and the ancient Heroes. Theſe were the Gods of *Athens*; and its Religion, the Worſhip of them, being wholly given to Idolatry. Ælian. l. 4. c. 6. Strabo l. 9. p. 396.

Ver. 18. *A Setter forth of ſtrange Gods*, ξένων δαιμονίων, foreign Demons, to which their itching Ears gave immediate Attention, being above all others ſuperſtitiouſly diſpoſed to admit foreign Gods and Worſhip into their own. As *Strabo* notes that their Hoſpitality to Strangers extended to the Gods, πολλὰ τῶν ξενικῶν ἱερῶν παρεδέξαντο, in receiving many ſtrange Gods or Worſhips. Their Superſtition had not only adopted all the monſtrous Fictions of Antiquity, but they themſelves continually added new ones. L. 10.

The *Romans* on the contrary were unkind to ſtrange Gods, and did not receive them but with Difficulty, that they might be ſaid, μισοξενεῖν ἢ φιλοξενεῖν, to be Haters rather than Lovers of them: And *Dion Caſſius* ſays, one of the blackeſt Crimes of *Sardanapalus*, was introducing into *Rome* the Worſhip of *Heliogabalus*; and though he was a foreign God, he revered him more religiouſly than any other, ſo far as to ſet him above *Jupiter*. Dion. Halicarnaſ. L. 2. p. 351.

But by the Law of *Athens* no foreign God or Worſhip was to be admitted, till approved and licenſed by the *Areopagus*, which had the ſole Power in religious Matters; and according to *Demoſthenes*, no one had ever complained of any unjuſt Sentence given In Ariſtocrat.

given by that Court; yet the ſevereſt Laws were enacted at *Athens*, and every Citizen commanded on Pain of Death to worſhip the Gods and Heroes as the Laws of the City required: And they who obſerved not the appointed Ceremonies, were immediately dragged to the Court of *Areopagus*. The cutting a Twig out of a ſacred Grove, was a capital Offence; even a Fool has been condemned for killing one of *Æſculapius*'s Sparrows. And a Child accidentally taking up a Plate of Gold fallen from *Diana*'s Crown, was put to Death for Sacrilege.

From theſe Admiſſions aroſe the different Titles of the Gods, *Patrii*, thoſe of the Country, and *Peregrini*, Foreigners or ſtrange Gods: There were alſo older Gods, παλαιότεροι, and newer ones, νεώτεροι; the *Dii Patrii* were commended for the Ancientneſs of their Worſhip; but the *Peregrini* were new Gods, in regard they were lately procured or choſen. And at *Athens* there was a vaſt multitude of theſe new ſtrange Gods, whom they termed, ξένους or ξενικοὺς θεούς. *Apollophanes* the Poet had put together their Names and Series in his *Cretenſibus*, as *Heſychius* teſtifies in θεοὶ ξενικοί; and thoſe are what *Cicero* ſays were diſquieted by *Ariſtophanes*; ſo that *Sabazius*, and ſome others of them, were by him judged ſtrange, and had been ejected out of the City.

De Leg. l. 2.

This Court aſſembled on the Hill of *Mars*, becauſe that God was indicted and tried for Murder by a Jury of twelve Gods, but acquitted; and here were *Socrates* and others tried for invading Religion, and undervaluing the Gods.

Ver. 19. Hither was St. *Paul* brought, as a Publiſher of foreign Gods and Doctrines, *Jeſus*, and the Reſurrection, to be examined concerning them; though perhaps (as the Proceedings of the Court had been much altered ſince the Days of *Socrates*) not as a Criminal but a Benefactor, in having a new

new Worſhip to propoſe to a People zealous above all others in what they call Religion, as ſome have ingeniouſly conjectured. But the other Opinion ſeems preferable, that he was carried thither, as a Babbler, and a Sower of Sedition, and by putting new Notions into Mens Heads, before they had been legally authorized, was a Diſturber of the Peace, and had offended the Laws of the State. Warburton divine Legat. 284.

Dr. *Bentley*, Sermon 2. p. 9. (and with him agrees Dr. *Whitby*) ſays, "They too well underſtood the "Notion of a Reſurrection, to worſhip it as a "Goddeſs." But thoſe learned Perſons ſhould firſt have ſhewn how they came not to underſtand the Notion of a Fever, or a Jakes, too well to worſhip them for Goddeſſes. They knew it, juſt as *Epimenides* did the true God, in erecting an Altar to the unknown one, and at the ſame time building Temples to the moſt ſhameful Vices. Annot.

Ver. 22. He addreſſes himſelf in theſe remarkable Words, *Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too ſuperſtitious*, δεισιδαιμονεστέρους, more addicted to the Worſhip of Demons, or to the Worſhip of more Demons, than others. Both which Acceptations are true: For *Pauſanias* ſays, that they did worſhip the Gods more than others. And *Joſephus*, that all Men ſay they are the moſt pious of all the *Grecians*: And *Sophocles*, that this City goes beyond all in worſhipping and honouring the Gods. In Attic. 2. cont. Appion. in Oedip.

The Word has ſometimes been uſed for Religion in general, but is here put in Oppoſition to true Piety. *Religio veri Dei cultus eſt, ſuperſtitio falſi.* "Their Gods were falſe, and the Worſhip an ido- "latrous Superſtition." *Virgil* makes it conſiſt in being ignorant of the ancient Gods. *Vana ſuperſtitio, veterumque ignara Deorum.* *Athens* however adored all the Gods that Madneſs or Folly had ever invented. Lactant. l. 4. p. 402.

But δεισιδαιμονία ſignifies more than *Dæmonum cultus*, viz. a ſlaviſh Fear of Demons, or dead Heroes, and was ſo underſtood by the moſt learned Chriſtians, φόβος δαιμόνων ἔσα. And again, ἄθεος is one that does not think there is a God, δεισιδαίμων δὲ ὁ δεδιὼς τὰ δαιμόνια, ὁ πάντα δειδίζων, καὶ ξύλον, καὶ λίθον, καὶ πνεῦμα, ἄνθρωπόν τε, &c. one that fears Demons, and makes Gods of every thing, Wood, Stone, Spirit, Man, &c. the Word is derived from δείδω, to fear, and δαίμων, a Demon; ſo *Plutarch* makes it a troubleſome fearful Opinion of the Gods, which ſuppoſes there are Gods, but δείματα, Furies, Sprights, cruel and ill-natured ones. And therefore the Apoſtle might well charge them with it, whoſe Religion conſiſted wholly therein. They believed Demons to be true Gods; and Superſtition worſhips a Creature as God. *Religio Deum colit, ſuperſtitio violat.*

Clem. Alex. Strom. 2. p. 379. Id. Strom. 7. p. 701.

De Superſtit. in Init. p. 165.

Ver. 23. *An Altar, with this Inſcription, To the unknown God.* It was a Cuſtom among the Ancients, to engrave on the Altar, the Name of the God to whom it was dedicated, which at *Athens* in particular was neceſſary, to diſtinguiſh them amidſt a Conflux of the moſt remote and ſtrange ones from all Parts of the World. The ſame Altar was frequently dedicated to many, as one by *Piſiſtratus*, in the Market-place, to the twelve Gods; and βωμὸς τῶν δώδεκα Θεῶν, frequently occurs. The *Eleans*, *Arcadians*, *Athenians*, *Corinthians*, and *Lacedemonians*, had Altars in common to all the Gods. Βωμοὶ Θεοῖς πᾶσιν ἐν κοινῷ.

Thucyd. l. 6.

Plutarch. in Nicia.

Pauſan.

Amidſt this Variety, there was one to the unknown God, and probably there were many of them: *Philoſtratus* ſays, at *Athens* there were Altars of unknown Gods or Demons, ἀγνώστων δαιμόνων βωμοὶ, and *Pauſanias* mentions them in the Plural Number, Θεῶν ἀγνώστων βωμοὶ, Altars of the unknown Gods; by which alſo *Grotius* thinks might be de-

Vit. Apollon. l. 6. c. 7.

In Attic.

noted many Altars Θεῷ ἀγνώςῳ; *Critias* in *Lucian* ſwears νὴ τ ἄαγνωςον ὃν Ἀθήναις, by the God unknown to the *Athenians*. Yet *Triepho* at the Cloſe of the Dialogue, ſays, "We having found out the "God unknown at *Athens*, and worſhipped him "with Hands ſtretched up to Heaven, will give "thanks to him, as having been thought worthy "to be made ſubject to his Power." But as it is plain, the former knew not that God; ſo the latter, through the whole Dialogue, appears to have been inſtructed in Chriſtianity; or the Author, whoever he be, was one, and put theſe Words into the Mouth of his Interlocutor. Philopatris, vol. 2. p. 769.

Or if the whole Inſcription ran, according to *Oecumenius*, In Acta.

ΘΕΟΙΣ ΑΣΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΡΩΠΗΣ
ΚΑΙ ΛΙΒΥΗΣ
ΘΕΩ ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ
ΚΑΙ
ΞΕΝΩ.

To the Gods of Aſia, Europe, *and* Africa, *to the unknown and ſtrange God:* The crowding him among all the Demons in the World, proves them to be totally ignorant of his Nature; as the placing him among the ſtrange ones, does, that they had received him from others, and were not Authors of the Diſcovery.

There are ſeveral Reaſons given for the erecting ſuch Altars. But the moſt probable is, their ſuperſtitious Fear of omitting any God, which, amidſt the Uncertainty of ſo many different Religions, might eaſily have been done; or it might proceed from their not knowing what God to aſcribe ſome remarkable Benefit or Deliverance to, and therefore in Gratitude erected an Altar to the unknown One. *Diogenes Laertius* gives this Account of their Riſe: "That *Epimenides* ſtaid a Plague among the *Athenians* In Epimenide.

" *Athenians* in this manner. He took a black " and white Sheep to *Areopagus*, whence he let " them go which way they would; commanding " thoſe that followed them, that whereſoever they " lay down, they ſhould ſacrifice them τῷ προσή- " κοντι Θεῷ, to ſome fit and proper God. The " Calamity ceaſed, and to this very Day, ſays *La-* " *ertius*, there are Altars to be found without Name, " which were then made in Memory of this Ex- " piation." The Peſtilence was undoubtedly ſtopped by the true and living God; but does it not obviouſly occur, that neither *Epimenides*, nor they, knew the Author of this Event, whether *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, or which among the Hoſt of Gods, and therefore aſcribed it to a meet God, but they could not tell who. *Epimenides* was a *Cretan*, and they were religious Worſhippers of that *Jupiter* they had given the World; and if *Solon*, the wiſeſt Man in *Greece*, who lived in the ſame Age, Olympiad 46, was ignorant of the true God, it is hard to conceive otherwiſe of *Epimenides*, by whoſe Advice the *Athenians* built Temples to Contumely and Impudence: Τῦφεως καὶ Ἀναιδείας.

Cic. de Leg. l. 2.

Let us ſee whether his Character will afford any ground for ſuch Suppoſition. *Laertius* indeed ſays, that he was γνωσικώτατος, *divinandi peritiſſimus*, *moſt ſkilful in divining*, and Θεοφιλέστατος, *moſt dear to the Gods*; and that the *Cretans* ſacrificed to him as to a God, ὡς Θεῷ. *Ariſtotle* ſays, he did not propheſy or divine of Futurities, but of what was paſt and obſcure. *Cicero*, That as there were two Methods of divining, one by Art, and the other without it, by an enthuſiaſtick Motion of the Mind, or Madneſs; that *Epimenides* was of the latter Sort: *Quod & ſomniantibus ſæpe contingit, & nonnunquam vaticinantibus per furorem; ut Bacis Bœotius, ut Epimenides Cres, ut Sibylla Erythræa*; and *Plutarch*, that he was skilful in religious Matters, both fanatical,

In eod.

Rhetor. l. 3. c. 17. p. 466.

Divinat. l. 1.

Vit. *Solon.*

tical, and myſtical, περὶ τὰ θεῖα, τὴν ἐνθουσιαστικὴν, καὶ τελεστικὴν σοφίαν; and that after luſtrating the City, he would ask no Preſents in Money, but only asked a Bough of the holy Olive. The Sum of which is, that he was an excellent Prieſt, Augur, and Soothſayer, skilful in all the Superſtitions and Myſteries of Idolatry; from whence I think it cannot be inferred, that he was an Evangeliſt of the true God; or if ſo, it is evident that he left him unknown to the *Athenians*.

Another Original of theſe Altars is ſaid to be on this Occaſion: The *Athenians* ſending to ask Aid from the *Lacedemonians*, the Form of *Pan* met the Ambaſſadors, and complained that they worſhipped other Gods, but neglected him; however he promiſed his Aſſiſtance, if they amended for the future: Wherefore after their Victory, not being certain to whom they owed it, they erected an Altar to the unknown God. What is this but a Legend ſuited to the Darkneſs of the Times? If *Pan* were the true God, they did not worſhip him, nor come at the Knowledge of him by Reaſon or Nature, but from Hobgoblins and Apparitions, and *Jehovah* was preached by Meſſengers from *Pluto*. Oecumen. in Acta.

Nor was this Cuſtom peculiar to *Greece*, but obſerved by the *Romans* alſo, in the immediate Erection of Altars on any ſudden Benefit received; as that to Adoption mentioned by *Tacitus*, l. 1. and another to Revenge, l. 3. So the ancient *Romans* when they felt an Earthquake, betook themſelves by publick Command to religious Obſervances, but did not, as on other Occaſions was uſual, name the God, to whom they dedicated ſuch Solemnities, leſt by miſtaking one for another, they might oblige the People to a falſe Worſhip; and as it was uncertain by what Power, or God, Earthquakes happened, they offered Sacrifice to an un- A. Gell. l. 2. c. 28.

certain Deity, in the ancient Form, *ſi Deo, ſi Deæ*, which was by the Decree of the Prieſts, ſays *Varro*.

The *Latins* had alſo many Altars, *Diis Deabuſque omnibus*; *& Dibus Deabuſque omnibus*; *& Herculi invicto, & cæteris Diis*: And the moſt learned among them, *Tully*, was under the ſame Ignorance and Diffidence, when he adviſed his *Terentia* to return thanks to ſome God or other, that had given her Relief in her Diſorder, but could not tell who, whether *Apollo* or *Æſculapius*. But, *cui quidem tu Deo, quemadmodum ſoles, piè & caſtè ſatisfacias velim.*

Epiſt. 7. l. 14.

So among the *Carthaginians*, it was cuſtomary, if they did not proſper by worſhipping the Gods they did know, to ſacrifice to them they did not know. After the Defeat of *Imilco* in *Sicily*, and their being invaded, they immediately ſet about atoning *Ceres* and *Proſerpine*, whom they had never adored before; and having expoſed all the Statues of the Gods, ordered them to be worſhipped after the *Grecian* Manner.

Diod. Sic. l. 14. c. 7. p. 391.

The Ignorance of the Divine Nature made this Uncertainty run through the whole of their Religion; Many were *Dei involuti*, they knew not whom they ſhould adore, therefore to their Prayers added, *Sive tu Deus es, ſive Dea*; and in their publick Devotions when they doubted the Name, the Form was, *Diſ. Pater. ve Jovis. Manes. ſive. vos. Quo. alio. nomine. fas. eſt. nominare.* As alſo, when the Sex of their Gods was dubious, many of them being *Hermaphrodites*, they mentioned both, as *Onomacritus* in his Hymn to *Minerva* thus beſpeaks her, Ἄρσην μὲν κῦ θῆλυς ἔφυε, or ἔφυς.

Senec. Nat. Qu. l. 2. c. 42. Arnob. l. 3. Macrob. l. 3. A. Gell. l. 2. c. 28.

Boxhorn. And we meet with this Inſcription. *Sive Deo. Sive Deæ. C. Ter. Dexter. Ex voto.*

In

In the ſame Manner *Ovid*,

——*Quiſquis fuit ille Deorum.* Metam. l. 2.

And *Virgil*,

——*Sequimur te, ſancte Deorum,*
Quiſquis es—— Æn. 4. v. 576.

Innumerable Paſſages of the ſame kind every where occur; and *A. Gellius* juſtly tells us, who theſe unknown Gods were, *viz.* They whoſe Names were uncertain, or it was not lawful to declare them: Nay he whoſe Sex was doubtful, was called an unknown God. Noct. At. l. 2. c. 28.

From which it ſeems very evident, that the *Athenians*, by their Unknown God, intended ſome Deity, who they ſuppoſed had been propitious to them, yet not being certain of his Name, and that no Offence might be given, they called him unknown.

Yet it is perpetually hinted, as if this Altar were peculiar to *Athens*, and ſomething might be inferred from its being only in a Place, where the Sciences were carried to their higheſt Elevation: But this is a great Miſtake, ſuch Altars and Gods being common all over the World; and were ſo many that *Varro* wrote a Book of the unknown Gods, and another of the uncertain ones. In the *Attick Pagi* there were many Altars without Names. Near the great Altar of *Jupiter* at *Olympus*, there was one to the Unknown Gods; and the *Arcadians* worſhipped a Statue without a Name. Civ. D. l. 6. c. 3. Not. Id. l. 7. c. 17. Pauſan. Eliac. Id. Arcad.

And both *Pauſanias* in 1 *Eliac.* and *Theagenes* in *Lib. de Diis*, mention two Cities among the *Lydians*, in which was a large Temple with Altars in them, and Aſhes thereon quite different from the common Sort, &c. and here the Prieſt invoked the unknown God, reciting out of a Book ſome barbarous Form, in a Language utterly unknown to

the *Greeks*; and that as ſoon as he prayed, a bright Flame ſhone round, and conſumed the Wood he had laid upon the Altar, without any Fire being put to it.

p. 164. *Strabo* mentions this Cuſtom of the *Celtiberians*, that upon the Full-Moon they worſhipped an unknown or nameleſs God, ἀνωνύμῳ τινὶ Θεῷ, by dancing all Night before their Doors in unſeemly Poſtures; The *Perſians*, *Arabians*, and other Eaſterns had their unknown God. The People of *Marſeilles* in *Gaul*, openly profeſſed their Worſhip of unknown Gods, and found that this inſpired them with a greater Fear of their Deities. They worſhipped them at a Diſtance, and did not come near the Place where their Statues ſtood. The Prieſt did not approach them without trembling, and dreaded their appearing to him, that is, dreaded the knowing of them. And at *Bourdeaux*, amongſt other Demon Altars there was one to an unknown God, which ſtood with the reſt till they were all demoliſhed by the Command of *Martial* Biſhop of *Limoſin*. And if we paſs into *America*, we ſhall find the People of *Peru* and others to have alſo an unknown God, as well as politer Nations.

Wolf. Cent. 1.

Garcilas, l. 2.

So that the Argument will prove too much; if the *Athenians* knew the true God, becauſe they had an Altar to an unknown one, it will follow, that all others, even the moſt barbarous and ſavage were for the ſame Reaſon acquainted with him: though if we would ſpeak ſtrictly of theſe devout Idolaters, they knew no more of either, known or unknown Gods, than the Statue and the Name, all their Thoughts and Ideas of a Divine Nature being ſo infinitely diſtant from it: And *Sophocles*, at the Beginning of his *Menalippa*, made a Confeſſion which extended to all Men,

Jove,

Jove, of whom we here below,
Nothing beſides the Name do know.

Ζεὺς ὅστις ἐστὶν, ἐγὼ οἶδα πλὴν λόγῳ.

Barnes Edit. v. 2. p. 479. Philopat. v. 2. p. 768.

So *Triepho* in *Lucian* was quite ignorant of every thing relating to *Minerva*, but her Name.

Ver. 28. *As certain alſo of your own Poets have ſaid, For we alſo are his Offspring*, not of *Jove*, but *Jehovah*, the unknown true God, whom he preached unto them; which is only carrying on the Alluſion, and ſhewing how, on their own Principles, they might acknowledge him: And the Apoſtle might juſtly approve what had been truly but ignorantly wrote by any of their Authors; as many ſublime and moſt exalted Sentences there are in *Plato* and others, notwithſtanding their Idolatry: So St. *Paul* teacheth *Titus* to convince the *Cretans* out of their own Poets, *Tit.* i. 12.

Vid. Cl. Alexand. Strom. 1. p. 315.

Yet however viſionary it may be to imagine, that *Aratus* the Poet knew the true God, and referred his *Zeus* to him who made the World and all things therein, great Pains have been taken by learned Men to apply it in that Senſe. But does it follow, that becauſe the Words Θεὸς, *Deus*, or *God*, are applicable to the true one, that they were ſo intended by the Heathens? Are not many things ſpoken of Idols, or *Jupiter*, as *Optimus*, *Maximus*, &c. which cannot without Blaſphemy be attributed to them? The ſame Appellations which are given to one properly and piouſly, may be transferred to another improperly and impiouſly; but are they therefore the ſame?

Vid. Seld. Diis Syr. Syntag. 1. c. 6. p. 203.

Even the illuſtrious *Selden* confeſſes, that the Inſcription *To the Unknown God*, was brought to paſs by the Deluſion of *Demons*, or Devils; and yet the Apoſtle takes an Opportunity to cite it: Can we then otherwiſe imagine but that theſe Words of the

Id. Syntag. 1. p. 205.

Poet

Poet were ſpoken according to the Apprehenſion of Mankind, and that the Apoſtle only reſtores what was improperly ſaid of *Demons*, and gives to God the things which belong to God, what Idolatry had ſacrilegiouſly beſtowed on Idols?

Aratus was of *Cilicia*, the ſame Province with St. *Paul*, who therefore was not unacquainted with his Writings. He flouriſhed in the time of *Philadelphus*, and wrote his *Phænomena* and *Dioſemia*, both in ſuch Eſteem with learned Men, that *Cicero*, *Claudius*, and *Germanicus* tranſlated them into *Latin*. He begins his *Phænomena* with the uſual Invocation of the Poets, ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεθα, *à Jove principium*, and ſhortly after, τοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμὲν, *For we are his Offſpring*.

If he had not been inſtructed from the *Jewiſh* Schools, he muſt ſpeak theſe Words, either as they were generally underſtood, or elſe as an inſpired Perſon; the latter no one ſuppoſes, and on the former there cannot be a better Comment than what the inquiſitive and learned *Diodorus Siculus* ſays, that it is generally believed, that all Men were originally his Offspring: Of *Jehovah?* No; but of *Jupiter* the *Cretan*, that infamous Adulterer and Idol of the Poets.

L. 5. c. 4.

But whoever carefully reads the whole Paſſage of *Aratus*, will, I think, be of Opinion, that by *Jupiter* he means the Univerſe, the greateſt God of the Ancients; for immediately before he ſays, the Villages and Ways, the Markets, Harbours and Seas, are full of *Jupiter*; and πάντη δ' Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες, *We all of us make uſe of every part of Jupiter*. And *Theon*, in his *Scholia*, interprets that Hemiſtich even in a ſecondary Meaning, as ſpoken of the Air, which he calls τὸν Δία, or τ̀ Ζῆνα τ̀ φυσικὸν, *the Natural Jupiter*, in whom, in an inferior Senſe, we may be ſaid *to live and move, and have our Being*; for without Air no Creature can ſubſiſt, it adminiſtring the

Vid. Cl. Alexand. Strom. 5. p. 597.

the moſt immediate Matter of Life unto them, by feeding and refreſhing their animal Spirits. And *Theon* muſt be allowed as competent a Judge of the Poet's Meaning as any Modern. Nor is that Expreſſion any more than the old Iambick, Ζῶμεν ἐν αὐτῷ, κ᾽ κινούμεθα; or that of *Lucan*, *Jupiter eſt quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris*; the ſame as *Virg. Ecl.* 3. *Jovis omnia plena.* Which I imagine no one was ever ſo void of Reaſon, as to interpret of God that made Heaven and Earth.

Thus the Apoſtle firſt ſhews the *Athenians* wherein their Guilt of Superſtition and Idolatry conſiſted. 2*dly*, He teaches them a new and proper Object of their Adorations; a God, but confeſſedly unknown to them, as diſtinguiſhed by a more auguſt Character than any of their Deities had aſſumed, *The Maker of all things.* And, 3*dly*, That ſome Expreſſions of their own Writers could be applicable to him only; for, as the Creator of Men, we are his Offſpring; as their Preſerver, *in him we live and move, and have our Being.*

I ſhall add to what has been already ſaid (concerning *Innate Ideas*) on *Rom.* ii. 14. that *the Heathens not having a Law, are a Law unto themſelves*, and other Texts of the ſame Import, that we muſt underſtand and explain them in a Senſe agreeable to the *Hebrew* Acceptation, in which they were wrote. Now it is certain, that the Jews abſolutely denied any Natural Law diſcoverable by the mere Light of Reaſon: And that in general (eſpecially the *Phariſees*, who were the Doctors and Expounders of Religion, and of whom St. *Paul* was one) never intended by univerſal, common, unwritten, or natural Law, any more than the Commands given by God to the Firſt Parents of Mankind, and by them tranſmitted to their Poſterity, who were all equally under an Obligation to obſerve it, from the Authority of him that ordained them. Theſe they ſuppoſed to be contained

Vid. Seld. de Jure Nat. & Gent. juxta Diſcip. Ebr. L. 1. c. 8.

tained in the Precepts of the Sons of *Noah*, propagated through the ſeveral Diſperſions of Mankind, and for ever continued a Law, or Rule of Life, to the Heathen World. And that they were no farther bound by the written Law of *Moſes*, than as thoſe unwritten ones were afterwards incorporated with it.

It was from the Obſervance of this Law, that *Noah* was found juſt, and *Abraham* became the Friend of God; of whom God ſays, *Gen.* xviii. 19. that *he ſhall command his Children and his Houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment.* This Way, the Doctrine, and the Law, which God had ſhewed to Men. And no other Interpretation can be given of thoſe remarkable Words in *Job* xxiii. 11, 12. *My Foot hath held his Steps, his Way have I kept, and not declined, neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lip, and I have eſteemed* (or hid in my Breaſt) *the Words of his Mouth.* But theſe were not immediately delivered by any Revelation, and therefore muſt refer to a former Declaration of the Divine Will, *viz.* to our Firſt Parents, which was of perpetual and unalterable Obligation to the Sons of Men; and is what *Iſaiah* applies to the Heathen, and calls, xxiv. 5. *the Law, the Obedience, the Everlaſting Covenant.*

The *Jews*, in ſhort, rejected any Natural Law, but what the God of Nature had declared, and ordained for the Direction of Men. And with them, Univerſal or Natural Law was the ſame as the Way, the Footſteps, the Words, the Dictates, and Commands of the Supreme Being.

But as the conſidering every particular Text, would run into too great a Prolixity, I ſhall only ſhew in general;

I. That the Scriptures do not attribute the Knowledge of the true God to the Heathens.

II. That

II. That they ſuppoſe them incapable of attaining or diſcovering ſuch Knowledge.

III. That Men loſt the Knowledge of God by their own vain Reaſoning and Philoſophizing.

Firſt, That the Scriptures, &c. It muſt always be remembred, that through the whole Scripture the peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Character of the true God, is *Creation* and *Omnipotence*, which was never given to any other. The firſt Words of the Divine Hiſtorian are, *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.* Gen. i. 1. What the Heathens adore are but his Creatures. *For all the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens.* Pſ. xcvi. 5. And again, *Among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, there is none that can do as thou doſt.* Pſ. lxxxvi. And, *Thus ſaith the Lord God, He that created the Heavens, and ſtretched them out, he that ſpread forth the Earth*, &c. and then adds, *I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory will I not give to another, neither my Praiſe to graven Images.* Iſ. xlii. 5. Id. 8. And, *I am the Lord that maketh all things, that ſtretcheth forth the Heavens alone, that ſpreadeth abroad the Heavens by myſelf.* Iſ. xliv. 24. And *Jeremy*, *He that made the Earth by his Power, he hath eſtabliſhed the World by his Wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the Heavens by his Diſcretion.* Jerem. x. On which is grounded the Prophetick Denunciation againſt every undue Object of Divine Worſhip. *The Gods that have not made the Heavens and the Earth, even they ſhall periſh from the Earth, and from under theſe Heavens.* And the *Wiſdom of Solomon*, xii. 27. *They acknowledged him to be the true God, whom before they denied to know.*

And the firſt Chriſtians, to diſcriminate their Faith from the *Gentiles*, profeſſed to believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

Nor is there one Line that I know of through the Old Teſtament, whence it may be inferred, that the Heathens had a Knowledge of the true God, who is

is always put in direct Oppoſition to the Beings they worſhipped, which were Devils, Demons, Deified Men, &c. Thus it is ſaid, *They have ſacrificed to Devils, not to God, to Gods whom they knew not. They have ſerved Gods whom they knew not, neither they nor their Fathers.* *David* is full to this purpoſe, that *in Judah is God known, his Name is great in Iſrael.* But as for the Heathen, *they are ſuch as have not known him, the Kingdoms that have not called upon his Name.* To know the Name of God, was the Mark of a true *Iſraelite*; To forget God, of the reſt of the World.

Deuteron. xxxii. 17. Jer. xliv. 3. Pſ lxxvi. 1. Pſ. lxxix. 6 Pſ. ix. 10.

So the Prophets: *Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the Families that call not upon thy Name.* Where the calling upon God is ſubſtituted for the whole Worſhip of him; but they acknowledged him not to be their God, and conſequently never worſhipped or prayed to him: *For they knew not their Maker, but counted all the Idols of the Heathen to be Gods; worſhipped the Things they made, and the moſt hateful Beaſts, ſo went without the Praiſe of God and his Bleſſing.*

Jer. x. 25. Wiſd. xv. 11, 17, 19

Iſaiah gives a full Atteſtation to this, in a Prophecy againſt *Egypt* (the great School of Wiſdom and Idolatry) and the calling of it to the Church. *Their Princes were become Fools, and their wiſe Counſellors fooliſh.* They who pretended *to be wiſe, and the Sons of ancient Kings*, and prove their Deſcent from the Gods, many thouſand Years before the Creation: Even theſe groſſeſt of Idolaters, *ſhall then ſpeak the Language of Canaan, and ſwear* not to falſe Gods, but *to the Lord of Hoſts. In that day ſhall there be an Altar to the Lord in the midſt of the Land of Egypt*; or they ſhall worſhip the true God, of which his Altar was the Monument and Witneſs; and *the Lord ſhall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians ſhall know the Lord.* Can Words more clearly expreſs their Ignorance of him; and how unprophe-

C. xix. V. 11. V. 19, 21.

tical

tical would it be, to ſay they ſhould ſome time know what they already knew?

In the New Teſtament our Saviour ſays to the Woman of *Canaan*, whom St. *Mark* calls a *Gentile* of *Syrophenicia*, *i. e.* a *Phenician* of *Tyre* or *Sidon*; *It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and to caſt it to Dogs*; a Note of Reproach and Diſtinction betwixt them, and ſuch as knew and acknowledged God to be their Father; which the Heathens did not. Matth. xv. 22.

Through all the Writings of the Apoſtles, Idolatry is the very Character of Gentiliſm. *Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away to dumb Idols, even as ye were led.* Which he thus explains: *In times paſt ye walked according to the Courſe of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Diſobedience*, i. e. the Devil, or *the Power of Darkneſs*. And as they *were Servants to him whom they obeyed*, they held Communion and Fellowſhip only with him. *Therefore the things which the Gentiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice to Devils, not to God.* They drank of the Cup of Devils, partook of their Table, and had Fellowſhip with them. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Eph. ii. 2. Col. i. 13. 1 Cor. x. 20.

And for this reaſon St. *Paul* ſo often aſſerts, *that they were without God in the World*, in ἀθεότητι, *a State of Atheiſm*, in being ignorant of the true God. And, 2*dly*, Thinking even ſuch things as had no Exiſtence to be Gods; and on theſe accounts were ἄθεοι, *Atheiſts*, (the very Term which the Heathens reproached the Chriſtians with, for not allowing thoſe to be Gods whom they eſteemed as ſuch) *and had no hope* of ſpiritual or future Bleſſings. Eph. ii. 12. Vid. Cl. Alexandr. Admonit. p. 14.

So to the *Galatians*: *When ye knew not God, ye did ſervice unto them, which by Nature are not Gods: but now after ye have known God*, &c. what is more manifeſt than that they knew him not before? Galat. iv. 8.

So

1 Theſſ. iv. 5. So he warns the *Theſſalonians not to walk in unnatural Crimes, as the Gentiles did which know not God*, nor his Will, as looking upon thoſe Sins as innocent or indifferent.

So that through the whole Scripture there is ſcarce one Truth more plainly or frequently aſſerted, than that the Heathens were utterly ignorant of the true God.

II. That the Scriptures did not ſuppoſe the Gentiles capable of attaining or diſcovering ſuch Knowledge, is evidently to be inferred,

Firſt, From the Characters under which they are conſtantly repreſented, which are purpoſely given to ſhew their Inability and Inſufficiency for it. By the

Iſ. lx. 2. Prophets in the Old Teſtament, *That Darkneſs ſhall cover the Earth, and a groſs Darkneſs the People.*

Iſ. ix. 2. Again, *The People that walked in Darkneſs, and they that dwell in the Land of the Shadow of Death*, which

Job x. 21. *Job* ſtiles the Grave, *the Land of Darkneſs and the Shadow of Death*; which implies their being as dead Souls in the dark Grave of Sin, under a total Deprivation of ſpiritual Knowledge, Light, and Life.

Wiſd. xv. 14. In the Book of *Wiſdom*, that *they are moſt fooliſh, more miſerable than the very Babes.*

All which Terms are directly applied to them in the New Teſtament. The Inhabitants of *Zabulon* and *Nephthali* are by our Saviour ſtiled a *People*

Matt. iv. 14. Luke ii. 32. *which ſat in darkneſs, in the Region and Shadow of Death.* This was *Galilee* of the *Gentiles*, being inhabited, ſays *Strabo*, by a mixt Swarm, *Egyptians*,

L. 16. Vid. Ham. and Whitby. *Arabians*, and *Phenicians*. *Joſephus* obſerves, that they are encompaſſed with many ſtrange, *i. e.* heathen Nations: And had continued in the darkeſt Ignorance of Duty and of God.

Acts xvii. 27. St. *Paul* abounds with theſe Expreſſions: *To ſeek after the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him.* A Task of the utmoſt difficulty, as Men blind or in the dark, put forth their Hands and feel, leſt

leſt they ſhould fall into Danger, and try to find the way; groping they know not where, and with the laſt Hazard and Uncertainty of Succeſs, as the Phraſe ψηλαφήσειαν clearly intimates.

He enumerates many of them together: *The blind, and thoſe which are in darkneſs*; not able to ſee, *as fooliſh*, void of all true Wiſdom, *and Babes*, like Children before the Uſe of Reaſon, unable to diſtinguiſh Truth from Falſhood. Rom. ii. 19.

He calls them, *By Nature the Children of Wrath and Diſobedience, dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins: Who walked in the Vanity of their Mind, having the Underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God through the Ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the Blindneſs of their Hearts, and being paſt feeling did give themſelves over unto Laſciviouſneſs, to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs.* Eph. ii. 1, 3. Ib. iv. 17.

By theſe and many other like Expreſſions, is the diſmal State of the Heathens every where declared in Scripture: That in their Minds they were blinded with the groſſeſt Ignorance, and deluded with the fouleſt Errors; in their Wills and Affections corrupted with the greateſt Diſorder and Senſuality; in their Converſation they practiſed all ſorts of Impiety, Iniquity, and Impurity; their Conceptions of God were falſe and unworthy, and their Worſhip anſwerable to their Belief, full of ſottiſh, ſavage, beaſtly Superſtitions; their Principles vain, and their Lives conformably diſſolute. Even the few wiſe among them were full of Ignorance and Doubt with regard to the main Points of Religion, the Exiſtence of God, a Providence, the ſpiritual Nature and future Subſiſtence of Souls.

So that the World was ſhut up *and concluded under Sin*, Darkneſs, Weakneſs, and Death, *and the whole Creation*, all Mankind, *groaned together and travelled until now*. And in the Scripture-Phraſe and Language, it was as eaſy for the Blind to diſcern and Gal. iii. 22. Rom. viii. 22.

find things, for the Deaf to hear, for Infants to argue and reaſon, or for the Dead to ariſe and walk; as for the Heathen, in the dark, corrupt, impotent State they were in, and which the unſearchable Providence of God permitted, to dive into, diſcern and know the *ſpiritual things which belong to God.*

Secondly, The Inability of the Heathens to attain the Knowledge of God, notwithſtanding all the Aids of Reaſon and Nature, may, I think, be ſafely concluded from conſidering the Dealings of God with them: He is jealous of his Honour, he hates the Sins of Preſumption, and is of purer Eyes than to behold or approve the leaſt Iniquity.

Yet how often are they aſſured, that all their paſt Crimes and Abominations ſhould never be laid to their Charge, if they would be converted to God by the preaching of the Goſpel? *That God in time paſt ſuffered all Nations to walk in their own ways*, to live after their own Opinions; having ſent neither Prieſt nor Prophet amongſt them to reveal his Will, nor had afforded any extraordinary Means or ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, to bring them to a ſaving Knowledge of him: *And how ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear without a Preacher?*

Acts xiv. 16.

Rom. x. 14.

Therefore the Times of this Ignorance God winked at, ὑπεριδὼν, overlooks, takes no notice of, paſſes them over in ſilence: *But now*, as having given thoſe Means of Knowledge, which were denied before, *commandeth all Men every where to repent*; which certainly implies a new Subject of Duty and Obedience. And if the Heathen either had a full Knowledge of God, as ſome affirm; or with others, that they might, with the greateſt Eaſe and Perſpicuity, have learned him from the Book of Nature; the Characters of which are ſo plain and legible, that he who runs, even the way faring Man, thoſe of the loweſt

loweſt Underſtanding, may read, and be perfectly inſtructed; and yet no notice is taken of their wilful preſumptuous Apoſtaſy; of ſuch loud and crying Sins, as called for Vengeance from Heaven: How is this reconcilable with infinite unerring Juſtice, that has no Reſpect of Perſons, but giveth to every Man according to his Works? Would not the State of Paganiſm be much happier than that of the Goſpel? Under which, *if we ſin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſaries.* Here Apoſtaſy is unpardonable, becauſe done with deſpite, wilful, obſtinate, and malicious. And yet are not the Ways of God, and the Decrees of Divine Juſtice equal? If ſo, Why did not that clear Knowledge the Heathens had, or might with ſuch eaſe have obtained, render their Idolatry the Object of inevitable Puniſhment? But if God will never wink at impenitent Sins in the Day of Knowledge, muſt we not conclude, that thoſe horrid Impieties, which ſo pure a God would take no notice of, were committed in a Night of darkeſt Ignorance? What other Reaſon can be given for ſo merciful an Allowance of Impiety and Impurity? Heb. x. 26.

When we conſider theſe and many other Paſſages, it ſeems very difficult to imagine the *Gentiles* had, or could ſo eaſily come at the Knowledge of God, their Duty to him, or to one another, as many of the preſent Age are willing to grant them; if that were the Caſe, if they had a ſtanding and unvariable Rule of acting, by which they were accountable, and in Equity might be judged; and if under ſuch Circumſtances, the Judge of the World (and ſhall not he do right?) winked at, and forgave them; ſurely their Condition was vaſtly preferable to the *Jews*, that

choſen Seed, whoſe Diſobedience was ſo conſtantly and ſeverely puniſhed, beyond the Example of other Nations.

But from theſe Proceedings of the Almighty, we may infer ſome not unuſeful Obſervations.

Firſt, That the ſevere and uncharitable Cenſures which many have paſſed upon the *Gentile* World, of their being unavoidably condemned to everlaſting Puniſhment, was founded on the Opinion of their enjoying, or what is the ſame thing, of having Capacities with the greateſt eaſe to attain an exact Knowledge of God and their Duty: And upon this Suppoſition it would be unreaſonable to determine otherwiſe. Such was the vain Opinion of the *Jews*,

Pirke Eliezer, c. 9. § 4. "That all *Iſrael* ſhall have a Portion in the World "to come; but the Heathens are to be Fuel for "Hell-fire."

Secondly, That as God is the Author of Mens Beings, who created and intended all for Happineſs, being of infinite Mercy as well as Juſtice; he ſurely will require no ſtricter Account than according to the Talents he himſelf intruſts, and has committed to their Charge: So that Impoſſibilities can never be the Terms of Duty, nor ſhall a Man be condemned for what was not in his Power to avoid. But whoever juſtly uſes thoſe Helps and Abilities he has, in a careful Search and Obedience of Truth, though he miſs of Truth, may be charitably hoped not to miſs the Reward of it.

For this Reaſon, *Socrates*, though an Idolater, and ſuperſtitious in the Article of Death, yet if he was humble, ſought for Truth with Diligence, and impartially choſe what to him appeared beſt; I ſhall not doubt but his Soul, and that of every honeſt Heathen, is happy, and will be bleſſed with the Viſion of God: For if it were a Miſery to be born in the Times of Paganiſm, it was not a Fault; and tho'

the Light to direct them was never ſo dim, if they followed it with Humility and Sincerity, embraced nothing without a due and calm Examination, nor acted contrary to the Conviction of their Judgment, it would certainly direct them to Light eternal.

Wherever there is a Law, there muſt be an Obligation to Puniſhment; and when a Man does what he is perſuaded he ought not to do, he is as obnoxious to Puniſhment as if the Law had been written in Tables of Braſs. If he does what after the moſt ſerious Enquiry appears to him beſt, he acts agreeably to the Law of his Nature, *his Thoughts will excuſe him*, and his Conſcience *bear him witneſs*, that he is innocent, even *in the Day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men by Jeſus Chriſt.* Rom. ii. 16.

One cannot indeed but be aſtoniſhed, that the Majeſty of the great God ſhould be ſo utterly forgot, and Man fall into that Stupidity, as to prefer dead Creatures to the Preſerver of all things. And yet we ſee Pardon and Allowance may be made to it, if proceeding from invincible Ignorance. Vid. Lactant. p. 115.

Thirdly, We hence learn the Rules of God's proceeding in Judgment, that it is the willing a thing that makes it our own: The chooſing and preferring one thing before another, knowing it to be in Inſtances of Duty or Sin, this conſtitutes the formal Good or Evil of an Action to us, and renders us accountable for it: And conſequently as the Degrees of Revelation, and Means of Knowledge are more or leſs, ſo is a Perſon's Ignorance more or leſs excuſable before God. The Caſe of the Heathens ſeems to be ſtated in thoſe Words of our Saviour: *He that knew his Maſter's Will, and did it not, ſhall be beaten with many Stripes; but he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of Stripes, ſhall be beaten with few Stripes.* Luke xii. 47, 48. And this is grounded on the ſtricteſt Equity, *That unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required*, &c. Where therefore the Er-

ror is involuntary, and the Ignorance morally invincible, that after the moſt diligent Search after Truth Men are not able to find it; we cannot but hope that a merciful God will weigh theſe Circumſtances, and make Allowances for the Infirmities of his Creatures; and that the Heathens, if ſerious in finding out Truth, and impartial in chooſing what appeared to be the beſt, will not, we truſt, find that gracious Being they have to deal with, ſevere to mark all that is done amiſs, nor eternally condemn them, for not doing what they could not know to be their Duty: But the honeſt *Gentiles* ſhall receive a Reward, when their Sun ſhall ſet, and Night put an End to their Labours. *For many ſhall come from the Eaſt, and from the Weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven: But the Children of the Kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer Darkneſs.*

Mat. viii. 11.

We need not here diſpute about their Degrees of Happineſs, if it be allowed that they ſhall not be utterly deprived of Reward for want of an impoſſible Condition. There may be different Manſions, and the bleſſed differ from one another, as the Stars in Glory; yet in the everlaſting Sabbath of Reſt and Felicity, every one will be happy to their utmoſt Capacities and Wiſhes.

The Sum is, That according to the Degrees of Knowledge which God has afforded, ſo ſhall Mens Crimes receive Aggravation of Guilt and Increaſe of Puniſhment; and the more Light and Grace he beſtows on any, the more and better Performances will he require of them.

Thirdly, The Scriptures attribute the Depravation and Loſs of Divine Knowledge to Mens own Reaſonings and Philoſophizings upon it.

This is laid down as a ſure unerring Rule to guide our Thoughts by, that the Things of God are not known but by the Spirit of God: *Becauſe the Natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,*

1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.

for

for they are Fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned, The Apoſtle affirms he cannot know them; and the Reaſon muſt be, that all Parts of Divine Wiſdom are too tranſcendent for natural Light, even in thoſe of the moſt elevated Endowments, perfectly to contemplate or apprehend; there being a ſpiritual Darkneſs both in the Things to be known, and the Faculty that is to receive them, which cannot be taken away but by God, in manifeſting the thing to be known, and taking off the Vail from the Mind, thereby enabling it to apprehend ſupernatural Objects; both which are included in Revelation, which is an immediate Act and Communication of God. And for Nature to find out ſupernatural things, is to act above Nature, or an Impoſſibility. Ib. ver. 14.

The ſame is true of the Angelic World: Their Glory and Excellence is only owing to a nearer Contemplation of the Infinite Beauties of the Divine Eſſence. But this is owing to the Will of God, whoſe Miniſters they are, and not to any Neceſſity of his Nature or theirs, being abſolutely dependent on his omnipotent Will.

This St. *Peter* illuſtrates: *He that wanteth theſe things* (thoſe Graces of God mentioned in the preceding Verſes) *is blind, and cannot ſee afar off.* The moment the Divine Aſſiſtance is withdrawn, we are unable to ſeek for, conſider, or underſtand them, the whole Procedure of Divine Knowledge being under his Guidance, Influence, and Direction; and when once that forſakes us, or we that, we become blind in the Diſcernment of Things, and our Reaſonings about them. 2 Pet. 1. 9.

This was the Caſe of the World, God manifeſted himſelf to them, and they might, through a due Contemplation of his Works, have been fully convinced of his inviſible Perfections. But they no ſooner began to ſpeculate about Nature, and account

for Things by their own Reaſon, but they departed from true Wiſdom, *grew vain in their Imaginations*, wholly attended to viſible Objects, and gradually forgot the Maker of them; till at laſt, though *profeſſing themſelves wiſe, they became Fools*, ſo ſtupid and brutal as to *worſhip the Creature more than the Creator*.

Col. ii 8. *They ſpoiled* the nobleſt Truths *through Philoſophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men*; debaſed themſelves with their own Inventions, converted what they did not thoroughly underſtand, into Fable and Mythology, and ſo *turned the Truth of God into a Lye*, which all the Labour and Study of their wiſe Men could never rectify; but became the Ground of perpetual and inexplicable Diſſenſions among them. This was *after the Rudiments of the World*, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα, *according to the Elements and Principles of natural Reaſon and Philoſophy*, both which were falſe and imperfect.

Wherefore, ver. 18. *He would have them dead to the Rudiments of the World*, thoſe human Inſtitutions which had depraved Revelation, and were wholly vain and uſeleſs to the great End of Man, the Knowledge and Enjoyment of God. For, ver. 22. they *are only the Commandments and Doctrines of Men*, a broken and corrupt Syſtem, and abuſed to Pride, Vanity, and Idolatry. For even this outſide Knowledge, ver. 18. *vainly puffed up their fleſhly Mind* (the ſame Expreſſion is repeated 1 Cor. iv. 6, 18, 19.) all their ſpeculative Knowledge was inflated and empty, filled with Arrogance and Preſumption, and was no more than a conceited Ignorance, as void of all that only uſeful Knowledge which tends to the Salvation of ourſelves and others; a Contemplation of trifling and unprofitable Things, thin and aerial Speculations, without any mixture of true and ſolid Science; *but was a Science falſly ſo called*, 1 Tim. vi, 20. conſiſting chiefly *in fooliſh*

and

and unlearned Queſtions, which ſerved only to gender Strife, 2 Tim. ii. 23. and no way conducive to the Improvement or End of Man.

To ſhew the Vanity of all which artificial Learning, the Apoſtle, 1 Cor. i. 20. asks, *Where is the Diſputer of this World?* the contentious Litigator, or Striver about Words; or συζητὴς, *the Searcher or Enquirer into the Nature of Things?* Their Philoſophy becoming the Subject of infinite Queſtions, Cavils, and Controverſies; when it follows, *Hath not God made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this World?* ἐμώρανεν, *ſo as to appear frantick and mad*, in that they could not find out the Truth, which ought to be the End of all philoſophical Studies and Enquiries: As if he had ſaid, Hath not God made all thoſe pompous Contemplations of the proud Philoſophers (who with ſuch Labour have pried into the Bowels of Nature for hidden Philoſophy) appear to be fooliſh and vain? In that they have not yet by all their acute Reſearches and Inquiſitions attained to any true Notion and Diſcovery of the firſt Principle, the God of Nature, which is the chief End of all Philoſophy: *For after that in the Wiſdom of God*, in the Works of Creation and Providence, *the World by Wiſdom knew not God*; thoſe blind Studiers of Nature could not read thoſe legible Characters, nor attain any true Notion, nor bring themſelves to any ſerious reverential Acknowledgment of him; which was an evident Demonſtration of the Madneſs and Folly of all their Wiſdom; as not being able to reach its firſt Principle or laſt End; notwithſtanding the various Manifeſtations of a God, they only groped about Nature (as *Seneca*'s blind Fool did about his Houſe, complaining the Rooms were dark) without being able to find the Author of it.

The Apoſtle therefore, to convince the World of the extreme Vanity of all their boaſted Wiſdom, and

and its Inability from all their Contemplations to attain the Knowledge of God, adds, *That it hath pleaſed God, by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, viz. the Goſpel, *which unto the Greeks was Fooliſhneſs*, ver. 23. *and by the fooliſh Things of this World*, the uneducated and illiterate Preachers, *to confound the Wiſe*, all the Labours and Contemplations of Philoſophy, to expoſe its Weakneſs and Wickedneſs, confound their Arguments and Demonſtrations, anſwer all Gainſayers, and in an Inſtant fully to deſcribe and explain the greateſt of all Subjects; the Exiſtence, Nature and Providence of a Supreme Being; which all the Force of Nature, the internal Endowments of the Mind, the Strength of Reaſon improved with the utmoſt Acquiſitions of Wiſdom, from the laborious Study of Nature and Advancements in Philoſophy, through the Courſe of ſo many Ages could not attain the leaſt Certainty or Knowledge of, *viz.* a true Notion of God, what he was, or where to be found.

On theſe Accounts the Apoſtle ſo vehemently and frequently repeats that Warning to his Diſciples: *To beware leſt any Man ſhould beguile them through enticing Words, and ſpoil them through Philoſophy and vain Deceit, after the Traditions of Men*: Which in times paſt had corrupted, inſtead of repaired their common Notions of Theology, was the Means of more effectually intangling them in Superſtition and Idolatry; and what he Prophetically foreſaw would be the Source of all the monſtrous Corruptions that ſhould infect the pure Doctrine of the Goſpel.

Coloſ. ii: 2, 8.

He eſpecially guards them againſt, (ver. 18, 23.) *that Shew of Wiſdom, in Will-worſhip and Humility, viz.* of Demons, which was in an eſpecial Manner the Religion of Philoſophers (as diſtinguiſhed from the fabulous and political) who, from their Miſunderſtanding or Stupidity, had perverted this great Doctrine,

trine, and eſtabliſhed an Order of Beings, the *Phenician Baalim*, the *Greek* Demons, but Scripture Devils, to be Mediators betwixt them and the heavenly Gods, and became direct Objects of their Worſhip.

He gives to *Timothy* a juſt Summary of Human and Heathen Learning, *That it is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Queſtions, and Strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmiſings, perverſe Diſputings of Men of corrupt Minds, and deſtitute of the Truth*; and therefore *bids him put them in remembrance*, with a Note of moſt ſolemn Adjuration, *charging them before the Lord, not to ſtrive about Words* (as was the Cuſtom of vain Philoſophers) *to no Profit, but to the perverting of the Hearers. To ſhun profane and vain bablings, i. e.* ſays *Grotius*, "The Inventions and Comments of Men "on divine Matters, without any Revelation," *for they will increaſe unto more ungodlineſs*, to the introducing of Error, Hereſy, and every Abomination; *And their Words will eat as doth a Canker*, the venomous Influence of Philoſophy will ſpread like a Gangrene over the ſound Parts of Chriſtianity. Therefore again he urges, ver. 23. *Fooliſh and unlearned Queſtions avoid, knowing that they do gender Strifes*; they had proved the Ruin of Philoſophy, and the Corruption of Religion.

1 Tim. vi. 4.

2 Tim. ii. 14.

All theſe Cautions the Spirit of God foreſaw were neceſſary, to prohibit the leaſt mixture of worldly Wiſdom with the Doctrines of Faith; nevertheleſs the fatal Effects thereof ſoon appeared in the *Gnoſticks*, or Men pretending to extraordinary Knowledge, "Who, ſays Dr. *Hammond*, "abounded with an empty frothy Wiſdom, ta-"ken out of the *Pythagorean* Philoſophy:" And made Chriſtianity a mythologick fabulous Syſtem, filling it, in Imitation of the Heathens, with the Generation of the Gods, an infinite Number of Æons, Images, Ideas, Emanations, Angelick Powers,

ers, Middle and Mediator Gods, anſwerable to the *Pagan* Demons, and to which *Grotius* applies thoſe διδασκαλίας δαιμονίων, *the Doctrines of Devils*, in 1 Tim. iv. 1. And in this principally followed the *Pythagoreans*, who gave heed to ſeducing Spirits, had Commerce with them, were Magicians, as *Apollonius Tyaneus*, and taught their Doctrines, being thoroughly ſuperſtitious, in fixing the Order and Worſhip of Demons, external Waſhings and Purifications for the Expiation of Sin, *&c.*

And to mention no more, from the Vanity of Philoſophy, which aſſerted a Power in Man to perform all virtuous Actions, ſprang up Pelagianiſm, which confidently advanced the Poſſibility of attaining a State of Perfection and Impeccability; and thus made corrupt Nature independent of God, his Aſſiſtance, or Grace: And I wiſh it be not the ſame Pride, which in this Age exalts Nature and Reaſon to ſuch exceſſive Height, as to teach, that it is in the Power of Man, through a due Exerciſe of his Faculties, to diſcover what is neceſſary to his Perfection both in this World and the other; and conſequently that he ſtands in no need of Revelation.

This unnatural Exaltation of Reaſon has always proved the Bane and Curſe of it; and whoever pretends to derive, or account for Religion on thoſe Principles, will ſoon loſe the Chriſtian in the vain Philoſopher.

But I hope it fully appears, that in Scripture there is no Foundation for ſuch Pretences, on which nevertheleſs the whole Syſtem of Natural Religion is built: But by what means this Law or Religion of Nature, they ſay, may be attained, ſhall be the Subject of the next Enquiry.

The *Second* Argument offered in Support of Natural Religion, is, from the Contemplation of the Works of God.

The

The Maintainers of the Law of Nature affirm, that Man by the due Uſe of his Reaſon, and without the Help of Revelation, may diſcover what is neceſſary to be known or done, *i. e.* the Knowledge of God, of their Duty to him, themſelves, and one another; from a due Obſervation of, and proper Inferences from the Grandeur, Beauty, and Order of the Univerſe.

To guide our Judgment in a Point of ſuch Importance, it will be neceſſary to conſider whether both the Inſtrument and Means be ſufficient for the Purpoſes aſſigned to them, ſince from a Failure in either of theſe, the whole Superſtructure muſt fall to the Ground.

The Inſtrument is the Faculty of Reaſon; and the Means are thoſe Collections and Inferences it may make from a ſerious Contemplation of created Beings, Man's own Frame, and that Relation and Fitneſs, which ſo evidently appear in the Series, Order, and Dependence of Things.

Now to make a juſt Eſtimate of Reaſon, we cannot take the Standard of it from the State of Innocence, when the Judgment was clear, and there were no inordinate Paſſions to bias it; nor in this corrupt State of Nature, from any two or three Perſons who may have appeared in the Space of ſo many thouſand Years; nor, as has been before obſerved, from any Treatiſes of Morality ſince the Revelation of the Goſpel: But from the Bulk of Mankind, from more Millions, than there have been ſingle Philoſophers in the World; becauſe this is Nature which is regular in its Actings; and if the ſame Cauſes ſometimes produce ſurpriſing, extraordinary, or different Effects, we ſay there is ſomething preternatural in it, or that Nature had acted beyond, and above its uſual Courſe.

It is thus in Vegetable and Animal Productions, and the ſame Rule will hold alſo in the Rational:

What

What the preſent Age is in its Intellectual Powers, ſuch was the laſt, and ſuch will the ſucceeding be. There is no Inconſtancy, Variation, or Change therein: Times, and Seaſons, and Men are ſtill the ſame, without any Tendency to further Imperfection or Decay. Whatever Difference there has been in ſeveral Ages, it was owing to ſome external Circumſtances, not to Nature. When Application to Knowledge prevailed, the Abilities of the Mind proportionably roſe; when diſcontinued, Ignorance and Barbarity ſpread themſelves over the World; yet the Faculties were the ſame, and the Difference owing to Culture, not to Nature.

And ſince infinite Power, and the moſt benign Wiſdom were the Contrivers of Nature, we muſt ſuppoſe they made a ſuitable Proviſion of all things neceſſary to the reſpective Condition of their Creatures: Therefore in Man, if there be a Duty required of him, he muſt have the Means of knowing and apprehending it, or there can be no Law to him; nor he be an accountable Creature, but under a natural Incapacity of anſwering the End and Purpoſes of his Being; under Obligation to Obedience, yet the Power and Means of obeying withheld by the Decree of his Maker, which ſurely is an Imputation not to be caſt on Divine Juſtice and Mercy.

Therefore, if every Perſon of a mature Age (without any natural Imperfection) in all Times and Places have not ſufficient Abilities clearly to know his Duty, and attain the perfective End of his Being; it muſt follow, that the Author of Nature, in not granting ſuch Abilities, does not require that Man ſhould come at the Knowledge of Duty by this Means; becauſe he cannot demand Impoſſibilities of his Creatures, nor will ſuffer them to periſh eternally without any Default of their own.

On

On the other hand, if this be the appointed Means of Knowledge, and Divine Truths are ſo obvious, that every Perſon has a natural Sagacity from ſenſible Obſervations and internal Reflexions, plainly to diſcover them, theſe Concluſions muſt neceſſarily be granted.

Firſt, That every humble attentive Mind may infallibly do it; becauſe otherwiſe he would have Powers and Apprehenſions to no purpoſe; the not having a thing, and not knowing that we have it, or Abilities to uſe it, being much the ſame.

Secondly, All theſe Truths would be equally plain and evident to every Underſtanding: For where Nature is alike, ſo will be its Operations; and as the ſame Object, from one Point of Sight, and through a proper Medium, appears to the natural Eye of different Perſons in the ſame Magnitude, Colour, Form, *&c.* and Sounds make a like Impreſſion on the Ear: So will Truths naturally inveſtigable, be diſcerned with the ſame Evidence and Certainty by the Mind; for where the thing is apprehended, and the manner of apprehending through ſimilar Organs or Faculties is the ſame, there will be no Difference in Opinion, no Uncertainty, or Contradiction about it.

Thirdly, If the ſame Duties oblige the whole Nature, they muſt be equally diſcoverable by every Individual which partakes of that Nature, the illiterate as well as the Philoſopher, in the Sheep-fold or Wilderneſs, as well as in the College; among the ſavage *Indians*, as in *Rome*, or *Athens*; or Mercy would be unequal, and Millions would be deſtitute of Means to attain the End for which all were purpoſely created. But all Souls are equal, and every Creature of God perfect in its Kind; and no Mortal dare to ſay, that infinite Wiſdom could not, or eſſential Goodneſs would not furniſh them with Powers ſufficient to attain their End; and as the knowing and

and ſerving God is the End of Man; if Reaſon be the Means intended to work out the End; every Man muſt have ſufficient Abilities to do it, or the Work of God will be imperfect.

Now if there had been but a few from whom theſe Truths were hid, it might be imputed to particular Sloth or Imbecillity. But when there are but a few (two or three, ſays Dr. *Clarke*) to whom they were known; what can be inferred but that this Knowledge was not from Nature, but ſome other Means?

And if Laws are attended with Rewards and Puniſhments, in which their Force conſiſts, ſince that from which we have neither Hopes nor Fears, is abſolutely indifferent to us, and a few only can know or obey thoſe Laws, but the Multitude be incapable of it: Then, by Virtue of ſuch Laws, one or two may be rewarded, but Millions of otherwiſe innocent but unhappy Souls, be finally condemned, having neither Means nor Opportunity of doing otherwiſe: Surely this is not a Law, but a rigid inexorable Decree; and if Man is to be eternally doomed by theſe Rules; if Omnipotence made Creatures on purpoſe to be miſerable, whither is Mercy flown, or where do Righteouſneſs and Juſtice dwell?

Or if the Law be only ſuch as it is diſcovered or apprehended, and the Obligation extend no further, then the Diſcovery will make the Law, and that be infinitely various as the Capacities of Mankind are; in common to all, yet not common or alike with any; to ſome a whole Law, to others in part; Univerſal, but not including Particulars; have Force to Day, and none To-morrow; compel here, and be abrogated there; in one Place ſhine, in another be extinguiſhed. A Camelion that changes its Colour, and is contradictory to its ſelf, as Circumſtances happen, in a thouſand Shapes and Inſtances (which

(which is the true Picture of Natural Religion thro' the whole Pagan World) and for theſe Reaſons can be no Law, but a vague unintelligible thing, without Force or Obligation.

Again, If the Diſcovery or Apprehenſion make the Law, every Man muſt have a right to judge for himſelf, according to ſuch Diſcovery or Apprehenſion, and conſequently to act, or not to act, ſo far as he has formed his Judgment, without being controlled by any other. For where one by Nature is a Judge, he may determine for himſelf, without ſubmitting to any external Authority or Inſtruction. He is to be guided by his own Reaſons, and thoſe only ſo far as they are perceived and evident to his Mind, for which he neither is, nor can be accountable, but exiſts in a mere State of Nature and Liberty, free, and independent of every other Being.

As then Nature, and its common way of acting, is the ſame, what is affirmed of it muſt hold univerſally; and let the Definition of a Man be what it will, it muſt be equally true of all, *Quæcunque eſt hominis definitio, una in omnes valet.* So if natural Theology is rightly defined, to be that which is attainable by the Light of Nature only, then all who have the Light of Nature, and the Uſe of Reaſon, are capable of attaining it; otherwiſe the Definition will be falſe and imperfect. Cic. Leg. 2.

Let us then only look abroad, and judge whether any of theſe things be applicable to Nature; we ſhall find the World as full of Savages now, as in the early Ages: And that could nine Parts in ten of the Inhabitants of the Earth be brought together, not one perhaps would have a tolerable Notion of a Divine Being, the Soul's Immortality, or a future State. It is poſſible they may have the Name of ſome things, but be abſolutely ignorant of the Nature of them; for to know a

thing, is to underſtand its eſſential Properties, that which conſtitutes it, what it is, and diſtinguiſhes it from all others; to call a thing a Clock, and yet not know it has Wheels, Weights, Springs, or Motion, or that it divides the Time, is the Skill of a Parrot, not the Reaſon of a Man. Yet no better Account can the *Africans* or *Americans* give of Divine Truths. They have no Apprehenſions of them, of the Perfections neceſſary to a ſelf-exiſting Being; what Duty is agreeable to him, or what Rewards or Puniſhments await us in a future State.

Nay, we may venture to take the Standard of human Reaſon, even from Chriſtians who enjoy ſo many greater Advantages than others do. Go into the Woods or Mines, and you will find Cannibals and Hottentots there. Examine and try the Commonalty in almoſt every Place, and you muſt obſerve how hebete and dull they are, how ſtrangely unacquainted with what they profeſs to believe, can give no rational Account of thoſe very Articles of Faith which perhaps they can repeat; have ſuch uncouth Ideas as are not only the Reproach, but the ſubverting of Religion, and literally fulfil the Apoſtle's Words, *That they have need that one teach them again, which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, have need of Milk and not ſtrong Meat:* Are Babes and Children, ſo far from being acquainted with the Elements of Religion, that they are ignorant of the moſt common Truths. "Talk "but with the Country People, almoſt of any "Age, or young People almoſt of any Condition, "and you ſhall find that though the Name of "God be frequently in their Mouths, yet the "Notions they apply this Name to, are ſo odd, "low, and pitiful, that no body can imagine they "were taught by a rational Man."

Heb. v. 12.

Lock. Eſſ. l. 1. c. 4. §. 16. p. 33.

Many

Many have natural Wit and Aptneſs to diſcharge their own mean Employments, yet take them out of that beaten Track, and you will find them ignorant of moſt Truths, doubtful of all, and able to account for none; So far from diſcovering Truth, that they cannot apprehend the Arguments whereby alone it could be diſcovered or proved. Put into their Hands any one Demonſtration of the Exiſtence of God, his Nature, or Providence; will they underſtand the Procedure, or diſcern the Connexion of the Premiſes? The Propoſition they ſo far know, as to repeat it, becauſe they have been taught it, but are incapable of perceiving its Evidence, or drawing Concluſions from it: And to affirm that the Law of Nature may be demonſtrated by the ſtricteſt Rules of reaſoning, yet that the World neither can do it, nor underſtand it when done, is ſaying little to the purpoſe. But this general Character of Man will hold true, that he is without Knowledge till he receive Inſtruction, without Conſcience, till informed what the Will of God is.

Nor is this any Degradation of Man, it is his Nature, what all Ages of the World bear witneſs to and confirm. *Socrates* ſaid of the Commonalty, "They do every thing by Chance, without Counſel "or Deſign: And to *Charmidas*, he calls even the "Aſſemblies at *Athens* Fools, ignorant, and ſtupid." Crito, p. 51. Xenoph. Mem. l. 3. *Plato* calls it "A thing agreed upon, that the Mul- "titude are no way able to receive Art or In- "ſtruction." And again, "That the Vulgar are "not capable of Philoſophy, *i. e.* of Religion, in "the Knowledge or Means of it." And *Ariſtotle*, "That they prefer the Life of Beaſts to any "other." Politic. p. 300. Repub. 6. p. 494. Ethic. l. 1. c. 5.

Cicero abounds with theſe Complaints, "That "every Place is full of Fools, *Stultorum omnia plena.*" "That amongſt the common People there is nei- Epiſt. fa- mil. l 9. 22.

" ther Induſtry, nor Diſcernment, nor Reaſon, nor " Wiſdom; they judge of moſt Things by Opi- " nion, of very few by Truth. *Non eſt conſilium in* ProPlanco. " *vulgo, non ratio, non diſcrimen, non diligentia. Ex* Pro Roſcio " *opinione plurima, ex veritate pauca judicat. Sic eſt* Comœdo. " *vulgus, ex veritate pauca, ex opinione multa æſti-* p. 206. " *mat.*" " That Virtue or Knowledge is ſeldom " to be met with in dull heavy Minds; *Tardis* Tuſc. Q. " *enim mentibus virtus non facile comitatur.* That l. 5. n. 24. " Philoſophy muſt be content with a few Judges, Id. l. 2. " induſtriouſly avoiding the Multitude, being miſ- n. 1. " truſted and hated by them." And in his Of- L. 2. c. 2. fices, when he treats of Wiſdom, or the Science of Things divine and human, and their Cauſes, he ſays, " His Countrymen were little acquainted with " ſuch things, though ſo highly deſerving of their " Knowledge; *Nec ſatis erant nota noſtris, & erant* " *cognitione digniſſima.* But Wiſdom ſhuns the " Crowd, *abhorrere à multitudine Philoſophiam.* Nat. D. l. " And with Juſtice he obſerves, that if the World 1. n. 9. " was made for the wiſe, it was made for a very Divin l. " few: If a Prodigy is what ſeldom happens, a 2. n. 28. " wiſe Man is one, and Mules have oftner foaled " than there have been wiſe Men in the World.

Epiſt. 29. *Seneca* ſays, " *Nunquam volui populo placere; nam* " *quæ ego ſcio, non probat: Quæ probat populus, ego* " *neſcio.* I never deſire to pleaſe the People, for " they do not approve what I know, and I don't " know what they approve." So of many it became Proverbial,

Bæotûm craſſo jurares aere natum.

St. Aug. de Morib. Eccleſ. Catholic. l. 34. The elder Chriſtians ſaid the ſame, and called them " *Turbas imperitorum*, a rude ignorant Mob, " who are ſuperſtitious even in the true Reli- " gion." They have ſcarce the Freedom of Reaſon, having no Criterion or Rule to judge of Truth or Falſhood by; are therefore Slaves to the Opi-

nions,

nions, and their Creed hangs upon the Lips of others; are carried with the Stream, and can give no Account of their Perſuaſion, but that others embrace it, without conſidering whether it be Dream or Demonſtration. Call them Rational, yet they are the Tools of another's Reaſon, not their own: For though Reaſon be an Inſtrument in the Hands of Nature and of God, yet without long forming, without Principles, Method and Order to work by, it is a moſt fluctuating giddy thing, and ſeldom produces any thing that is great or praiſe-worthy; it is Inſtruction only that gives it an Edge, and fits it for the proper Uſes of an intelligent Creature.

On theſe Accounts *Lactantius* and others very juſtly argued, "That if what they call Philoſophy "cannot be attained but by learned Men; if it ſhuns "the common Society of Mankind, it cannot be "Wiſdom, nor the Way to it; if true Wiſdom be "eſſentially neceſſary to the Well-doing and End "of Man, it cannot be confined to a Beard, a "Cloke, or the Schools, but muſt indiſcriminately "be divided among all. Every rational Creature, "of whatever Nation, Language, or Sex they be, "will be capable of it: And if they cannot attain "it by their own Mother-wit, the Author of Na-"ture never could intend they ſhould do it; or "they have natural Capacities to no purpoſe." Lactant. l. 3. §. 25. p. 290.

There is no other Rule to judge of the Powers of Nature, but general Experience and Obſervation: For every Creature is perfect in its kind; the Tree grows to its allotted Proportion, the Reptile, and Inhabitants of every Element, have all the requiſite Means to fulfil the Ends of their Being, as well as Bounds ſet them, beyond which they cannot paſs. Let the ſame Obſervation regulate our Thoughts with regard to Man; and we ſhall ſoon be convinced, that theſe things are out of his reach,

what Nature has denied him Powers or Faculties to attain.

And whatever Streſs the learned Maintainers of Natural Religion lay upon the common Abilities and Reaſon of Mankind; yet when they take a ſerious View of them, they are forced to ſpeak as I do, and complain how dull, how heavy, how almoſt without Senſe the common Multitude every where is: That they who are ſunk with Beggary, or Dejection, or Baſeneſs, do not eaſily give ear to Reaſon; and that of thoſe things which are needful for the Direction of all Parts of our Life, and not impoſſible to be diſcerned by the Light of Nature, are there not many, which few Mens natural Capacity, and ſome which no Man's hath been able to find out?

Hooker Ec. Pol. l. 5. §. 68. p. 241. Id. §. 76. p. 264. L. 1 §. 12. p. 74.

That grown Perſons of a very low and mean Capacity of Underſtanding; and who either by reaſon of the Weakneſs of their Faculties, or other Diſadvantages which they lie under, are in little or no Probability of improving themſelves, are always to be conſidered in the Condition of Children and Learners; and therefore muſt of neceſſity, in things which are not plain and obvious to the meaneſt Capacities, truſt to and rely upon the Judgment of others.

Tillotſon, vol. 2. Serm. 4. p. 32.

That the Neceſſity and Indiſpenſableneſs of the great and moral Obligations of Natural Religion, as alſo the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, very few are able in reality and effect to diſcover clearly and plainly for themſelves: But Men have great need of particular Teaching and much Inſtruction, to convince them of the Truth, Certainty, and Importance of theſe things.

Dr. Clarke Diſc. vol. 2. p. 155.

There are ſome Brutes which ſeem to have as much Knowledge and Reaſon as ſome that are called Men; and the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms are ſo nearly joined, that if you will take the loweſt of the one, and the higheſt of the other, there will ſcarcely be perceived any great difference between them.

Lock. Eſſ. l. 3. c. 6. §. 12. p. 262.

And

And that great Philoſopher Dr. *More*: That the Vulgar cannot have any tolerable Conceit of an Omnipotent, Inviſible, Immaterial Being; and only under an human Shape; which is the ſame that *Cicero* affirms. Cabbala, p. 62. Nat. D. l. 2. n. 17.

Here is an impartial Declaration from the wiſeſt among us: Let us then grant it, and only conſider what Steps ſuch Men could take to inveſtigate heavenly Wiſdom; to purſue it through Paths utterly unknown, to ranſack the vaſt Abyſs of Nature, and unfold the Cauſes, Relations, and Dependencies of Things, to unveil her Secrets, and behold the wonderful Harmony and unſhaken Steadineſs whereby ſhe acts, and diſcover Truths in the dark Shades wherein ſhe conceals herſelf, and by a piercing Diſcernment ſeparate it from Falſhood: In ſhort, by a clear and ſolid Underſtanding, to follow the Powers of Nature through all her Mazes, up to the firſt Spring and original Cauſe, and remove the thick Clouds betwixt him and Eternity: This ſurely is a Task (by their own Confeſſion) utterly inconceivable, altogether impoſſible.

How can they, who by a kind of Neceſſity, from the conſtant Labour of the Body, have the Mind bowed down and chained to the Earth; have neither Capacity nor Attention; know not how to expend Labour in ſearching after Truth, nor Care in weighing Arguments, nor Diligence in obſerving Things.—*Thucydides* makes it a general Obſervation on human Nature: That in the Search of Truth moſt Men are impatient of Labour, and ſooneſt embrace the Things that are next at hand. How can ſuch who have no Skill or Art to account for the leaſt thing they ſee or hear, ſo eaſily find out the moſt ſublime and glorious ones that can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive? and what no Wiſdom upon Earth has been able to explain further than they were revealed to us. Barrow, vol. 3. p. 321. L. 1. p. 9.

But the moſt Ignorant, when once inſtructed in theſe Points, will immediately ſee ſo much Truth and Reaſonableneſs in them, that they cannot withhold their Aſſent; as on the other hand, without ſuch Information, they would live and die without any Notion even of the Being of a Deity: And if ſuch, with an honeſt Heart, an humble and teachable Mind, receive Inſtruction, believe, and obey, they will never want ſpeculative Knowledge enough to ſave their Souls.

Lock. vid. Eſſ. l. 1. c. 4. §. 22. P. 37.

If we take a Survey of the elder Times, it will illuſtrate and confirm this. We ſhall find it was the Work of Ages to bring any Science to a tolerable Perfection; that the moſt extraordinary Genius's ſpent their whole Lives in unwearied Diligence and Travels, yet never attained true Wiſdom. *Pythagoras*, till the fiftieth Year of his Age, was a Scholar under the greateſt Maſters in the World. *Democritus* ſpent no leſs than fourſcore Years in hard Study. *Plato* attended the Lectures of *Socrates*, *Archytas*, and *Eurytas*, for forty Years; and *Ariſtotle* laboured more than twenty under *Plato*. Here were Perſons of the moſt ſolid Judgment and vaſt Capacity, with invincible Study and Application, and aſſiſted with the Labours of all preceding Ages, yet fell infinitely ſhort of Truth.

What then can others of a weaker Mind and ſlighter Practice, without any Aſſiſtance or Guide, do, from the utmoſt Efforts of their natural Speculations? It is an Obſervation almoſt as old as Learning, that in the common Labours of Life a Man ſtands in need of Strength and Patience, but in Philoſophy of much Leiſure. And *Cicero* notes it as a Remark he always made, That no one ever became eminent in Eloquence or Wiſdom, without the utmoſt Study and Application. *Semper ſtatui neminem ſapientiæ laudem & eloquentiæ ſine ſummo ſtudio & labore*

Ariſtot. 7. Polit. c. 15.

De Orat. l. 2. in fin.

bore & doctrina conſequi poſſe. And whoever tries, will find the Labours of the Mind to be greater and more fatiguing than thoſe of the Body. *Multo majora ſunt opera animi quàm corporis.* Cic. de Offic. l. 2.

Are not the Schools and Univerſities conſtant Witneſſes of this? How unintelligible things at firſt are, what Time and Pains are conſumed to enforce a Language or two; to teach the Art of Reaſoning; to open a few Paths or Inlets to real and ſubſtantial Wiſdom; yet notwithſtanding all this Apparatus, how few attain it, the World will judge.

But we muſt obſerve the wideſt Difference between the Procedure in Natural and Divine Subjects. In human Studies every Advancement pleaſes; and tho' we are not able to trace out all the Relations and Dependencies of things, or at once perceive the full Evidence of what we are contemplating; yet the Mind is eaſy, under no Anxiety or Deſpair. It may graſp at more, yet is under no real Dejection for what it continues ignorant of, as being no way eſſential to its final End and Good.

But in Matters of Duty, and of great Concernment, it is far otherwiſe: If the Mind have not a plain and direct Aſſurance of what Law obliges it, it muſt labour under Doubts and Fears of eternally miſcarrying: For whatever we do not know with Certainty, can be no more than a probable Opinion, which carries neither Evidence nor Obligation with it, nor can afford any Acquieſcence or Satisfaction to the Mind. Here is no room for unadviſed Raſhneſs, or ill-grounded Opinion. To be deceived is to be undone; and there cannot be greater Folly or Arrogance, than for Man to refuſe an omniſcient Guide, and aſſume to himſelf what by the Law of his Nature he is incapable of. Vid. Lact. l. 3. §. 13. p. 248.

Here we muſt reduce Things to their firſt Principles, and by the ſtricteſt Forms of Argumentation, ſhew how they are connected together, what the Truth

Truth of each Propoſition concludes, and by what Means a moral Evidence and Obligation ariſes from them. If this be not the Caſe, why are all Syſtems of Natural Religion forced to ſubmit to theſe Proofs, as the only Means to explain and eſtabliſh them; if they can be otherwiſe illuſtrated, why is it not done? If they cannot, I do not ſee how ſuch Religion can be called Natural, that wants Proofs of that Nature, which none but they who are converſant in the Depths of Philoſophy can comprehend.

And if ſuch be the miſerable Lot of Man, that he can only know his Duty by Metaphyſicks, Mathematicks, Abſtractions, and Illations, better he had never been born: If the Way to Life be ſo narrow, how few indeed would find it? Or if Duty be only diſcoverable by the Knowing, and without Knowledge there be no Obligation, the more unhappy muſt the Wiſe be, in bringing greater Reſtraints upon themſelves, for which the Ignorant are not accountable.

There is not an Author of note that ever mentions this Subject, to whoſe Words I might not leave the Deciſion of it. A late polite Writer agrees; That tho' the Natural Law in the Perfection to which it was carried by *Cicero*, might ſerve for a ſufficient Guide to the few, ſuch as himſelf, of enlarged Minds and happy Diſpoſitions; yet had it been ſo long depraved and adulterated by the prevailing Errors, and Vices of Mankind, that it was not diſcoverable even to thoſe few, without great Pains and Study; and could not produce in them at laſt any Thing more than a Hope, never a full Perſuaſion; whilſt the greateſt Part of Mankind, even of the Virtuous and Inquiſitive, lived without the Knowledge of a God, or the Expectation of a Futurity; and the Multitude in every Country was left to the groſs Idolatry of the popular Worſhip.

Dr. Middleton's life of Cic. v. 3. p. 357.

The

The Concluſion therefore will be juſt; That if the Law of Nature be what is diſcoverable by the Light of Reaſon only, and the infinitely greater Part of reaſonable Creatures be unable to diſcern it; nay even the Virtuous and Inquiſitive, to diſcover the very Foundation of it, the Knowledge of a God; This cannot be the Means appointed by the Author of Nature to come at the Law of our Beings; there neceſſarily muſt be ſome other. Nor is it ſolving the Difficulty, to ſay, That ſome Individuals may be able to do it, and communicate it to others; for it is contrary to the Definition as well as to Truth; there being whole Nations and Continents, without any ſuch Teacher or Maſter ever among them; therefore God never intended it, nor requires it of them: Nor if there were, could they have any Right to demand their Aſſent or Obedience, nor others under Obligation to give it, without the Evidence of a ſuperior Authority.

But let us allow, that though the common Herd be unequal to this Task; yet the Wiſe of the World, ſome few enlarged Minds, poſſibly might diſcover theſe Truths, and be Evangeliſts to the reſt of Mankind: This will not mend the Matter, becauſe they never could (in ſuch Caſe) impoſe them as a Law to others; and that the Queſtion will ſtill return, whether even they were able to do it.

Ask the wiſeſt of Men, and they will confeſs the Weakneſs of Reaſon, that after all its Attainments it falls infinitely ſhort of Perfection, and is far from being commenſurate to Truth or the Nature of Things: That the greater Inſight they have, the more clearly they perceive a Want of farther Light to diſcover all their hidden Beauties. The deeper their Penetration is into what they already know, the more are they at a loſs to account for what they do not know; and what the moſt Diſcerning know more than others, is this, That a thouſand

thouſand Things are above their Reach, which they are, and muſt be content to remain ignorant of.

Men indeed deſire Truth and Knowledge, but they are not to be had at a cheap rate, not without Labour, and Watching, and painful Study. As they who do not penetrate Things to the Bottom, only raiſe Doubts, and fill themſelves with Inquietudes: Whence it has been made a Queſtion, conſidering the Preſumption and yet Weakneſs of the Mind, Whether the Learned are not more ſubject to dangerous Error and Miſtake, than the Simple and Ignorant? So near a Relation is there betwixt Science and Pride, the relying on our own Judgment, and being deceived.

But however, ſuch is the Obſcurity of Things, and the Inability of our Faculties, that the truly Wiſe of every Age have deſpaired of finding it out. Even *Cicero* never hoped to declare the Fulneſs of Truth, but only to expreſs ſomewhat that reſembled, and might approach near unto it. Notwithſtanding therefore the Pretence of Divine and Moral Truths being ſo obvious, they are not of ſuch eaſy Acceſs in other Parts of Knowledge: The Search is tedious and embarraſſing; cloſe Attention and unwearied Application muſt be uſed; yet the farther we penetrate into Nature, the thicker does that Darkneſs appear, wherein all Things are involved. The more excellent the Knowledge is, the more remote doth it lie from the common Level and Obſervation of Men; and the greater the Difficulties to be removed, before a clear and ſolid Judgment can be fixed. For the Truth of this I need only appeal to the Learned, whether their Enquiries are not often fruitleſs, in ſearch of Things beyond their Reach; too great for us to comprehend, or not fitting for us to know. And ſhall the Knowledge of God, and of ourſelves, the moſt arduous

Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 3.

ous Task, be accompliſhed with the leaſt Pains and Difficulty?

I ſpeak the Sentiments of Heathens as well as Chriſtians. "Are there not very few, ſays *Plato*, "if any, who are able to contemplate, αὐτὸ τὸ "καλὸν, καθ' αὑτὸ, *beauty in itſelf, according to it-* "*ſelf*; Nay, that the Power of diſcovering what "was beſt, was not common, but peculiar to the "Judgment of *Jupiter*, (which is a full Aſſertion, "that Reaſon is not the Meaſure, Rule, or Ca- "non of it.)" And again, I ſay, "It is not poſ- "ſible for Men to be bleſſed, and happy here, "except ſome few only." Repub. 5. P. 476. Ib. p. 8. Epinom. P. 973.

I ſhall add the Sentiments of a learned Divine of our own. "If we reflect upon the common "Nature of Man, or upon our own Conſtitution, "we cannot but find our Conceits of Wiſdom ve- "ry abſurd, if we obſerve the Blindneſs of our "Mind, and the Fickleneſs of Human Reaſon. "If we mark how painful the Search, and how "difficult the Comprehenſion is, of any Truth; "how hardly the moſt Sagacious deſcry any thing; "how eaſily the moſt Judicious miſtake; how the "moſt Learned everlaſtingly diſpute; and the "Wiſeſt irreconcilably claſh about Matters ſeem- "ing moſt familiar: How the wiſer a Man is, "and the more Experience he gaineth, the leſs "confident he is in his own Judgment, and the "more ſenſible he groweth of his own Weakneſs; "how dim the Sight is of the moſt Perſpicacious, "and how ſhallow the Conceptions of the moſt "Profound; how narrow is the Horizon of our "Knowledge, and how immenſely the Region of "our Ignorance is diſtended; how imperfectly "and uncertainly we know thoſe few Things, to "which our Knowledge reacheth; how anſwer- "ably to ſuch Experience we are told in holy Writ, Dr. Barrow, vol. 3. p. 318.

Writ, "*That every Man is brutiſh in his Knowledge*; "*That Wiſdom is hid from the Eyes of all Men, and* "*is not found in the Land of the Living.*"

Such Authorities ought to make us at leaſt heſitate, before we admit ſo boldly advanced a Propoſition: That Reaſon can diſcover and know the deep Things of God, declare his Exiſtence and Attributes, diſcern his Will, diſtinguiſh exactly in Matters of Duty and of Sin; when it thus falters and ſtumbles in every other Part of Knowledge, and is ſo liable to miſtake Truth for Falſhood, and Falſhood for Truth.

Or how comes it to paſs, that they who are Maſters of the Dialectick Sciences, ſo able to guide our Reaſon, aſſiſt in the Diſcovery of Truth, and fix the Underſtanding in Poſſeſſion of it, can find no ſure Criterion for Judgment or Aſſent, but the Reſult of all their tedious Study, is no more than Probability?

Cic. Nat. D. l. 1. n. 5.

Quint. 12. 10. Such was *Quintilian*'s Complaint: *Non tempus nobis deeſſe, verùm induſtriam, ordinem, rationem, & modum ſciendi.* Men of Learning find many Requiſites are wanting, beſides Genius, Leiſure, and Inclination, to the Diſcernment of Truth and Increaſe of Knowledge: And that juſt Principles, exact Method, and correct Reaſoning, are not without difficulty made familiar to the Studies and the Minds of Men. Among the few wiſe, to excel in one Science, is a Character of diſtinguiſhing Merit; to excel in more, of a rare and uncommon Genius; to excel in all, is yet to come.

But the Limits of human Reaſon cannot be very extenſive, when it is nonplus'd with every common Production of Nature. The overflowing of the *Nile*, for a long Courſe of Ages, wearied and baffled the Wiſdom of the Ancients; and happy was he that could aſſign a Reaſon for it, that could not eaſily be diſproved. *Ariſtotle* threw himſelf into the *Euripus*,

Vid. Diod. Sic. Herodot. Strabo, &c.

Euripus, for not being able to account for its Fluxes. To believe the *Antipodes*, was a Specimen of Madneſs or Delirium; the World laughed at ſo prodigious a Conceit, that Mens Heels ſhould be higher than their Heads, Fruits and Trees grow downward, Hail and Snow fall upwards to the Earth. Even ſome very learned Chriſtians durſt not admit ſo bold a Propoſition, leſt Mankind ſhould be forced to look out for another Parent beſides *Adam*. So long-lived is Ignorance, that in the Eighth Century *Virgil* Biſhop of *Saltzburgh* was publickly accuſed of Hereſy and Impiety, for believing this monſtrous Doctrine, thatt he Earth was round, and every part of it inhabited: Pope *Zachary* ordered a Proceſs againſt him, and that if the Articles were proved, that he ſhould be excommunicated and degraded. Vid. Lact. p. 287.

I won't ſay this is a Reproach to Nature, but that it is prodigious, if Men, with all their Philoſophy, could not account for the Floods in the *Nile*, or the Form of the Globe they lived on; nay that it was never done, till a *Newton* gave a Gueſs at it, and the *French* Mathematicians went to *Torneo* to try the Experiment, and confirmed it; yet could with eaſe diſcover the Regions of Heaven, and him who ſat upon the Throne in them.

To omit a thouſand Particulars: How has that fruitleſs Enquiry, whether there be a Vacuum, and what it is, exerciſed the Wits of all Ages? The *Pythagoreans* would eſtabliſh it as the Means whereby the World breathed. The *Stoicks* made it an infinite Space, in which the World ſhould be conſumed by Fire. *Poſſidonius*, not an infinite Space, but juſt as much as would ſerve for the Diſſolution of the World. *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* denied it; every one preferring the Opinion that leaſt ſhock'd them, without being able to anſwer the Difficulties objected againſt it. Vid. Euſ. Præp. l. 15. c. 40.

In

In the laſt Ages, ſome defined a Vacuum to be a Privation of Body, that is a Nothing. *Gaſſendus*, to avoid that, plunges into an equal Abſurdity, by imagining ſome Beings which are neither corporeal nor ſpiritual, neither Subſtance nor Accidents. The *Carteſians* deny the Poſſibility of a Vacuum; as *Leibnitz* and others do from the great Perplexities found in the Suppoſition: *Locke* could not anſwer the Queſtions of the *Carteſians*, but by propoſing others equally obſcure freely acknowledges, that he knows not even what Space, or Extenſion, or Subſtance are. And if we are ignorant of the Nature of Subſtance, what can we comprehend truly? Then *Newton* ariſes, and entirely deſtroys the Phyſics of *Deſcartes*, aſſerts a Vacuum to be ſo abſolutely neceſſary, that without it the Motion of the Planets and the Conſequences thereof, are Things inexplicable and impoſſible.

Even among the Mathematicians, who pretend not to move a Step without Demonſtration, we find ſome affirm, and others deny, and Diſputes prevail in that as well as other Sciences; which ſhews that Truth is ſometimes loſt among them: That their Demonſtrations do not always carry Evidence, and that they themſelves cannot always ſee through the miſt of infinite Diminutions, where a finite Atom is diviſible to Infinities of Infinites.

To which of theſe great Idols then ſhall we bend our Knee, or live in a perpetual State of Scepticiſm? Or may we not learn, that there are Bounds to the moſt exalted Underſtandings, and Room to doubt whether they can find out what is comprehenſible; when it is ſo hard to comprehend Motion, Extenſion, or the leaſt Duſt of Matter.

Another Queſtion of no ſmall Importance, and not fully cleared to this day, is πόθεν τὰ κακὰ, *whence or what is the Origin of Evil?* Every Fool is able to make

make the Queſtion, but few Men ſo wiſe, as to be either able to give, or fit to receive ſufficient Anſwer to it, according to the Depth of the Matter itſelf, ſays a very learned Man: For what Philoſopher or Divine has treated this Subject ſo accurately as to remove all Objections, and give thorow Satisfaction to the Minds of thoſe who ſearch for it?

Metaphyſicians have here a noble Field for their abſtracted Flights, whether, according to *Durandus*, there be any divine Concourſe in Sin? Whether, with others, Moral Evil has any real Eſſence, or real efficient Cauſe, or only deficient? Whether there be any pure Evil? Whether it be a Privation of Being, or a real poſitive Being? Whether it has not ſome natural Good for its Subject, and ſo the entitative material Act of Sin be phyſically or morally good? By what Degrees of Permiſſion an all-wiſe and merciful God ſuffered Sin to enter into the World, ſince he abhors the leaſt Appearance of Evil? *&c.*

The elder Heathens, when they obſerved the Wickedneſs and Miſery of Man, had no other way to ſolve it, but by admitting two Principles, the one good, and the other bad, as the Cauſes of theſe different Appearances in the World. This, *Plutarch* tells us, was the beſt Account, the moſt ancient and univerſal he could meet with. Among the latter Pagans, *Celſus* ſays, "It is difficult for thoſe who are "not Philoſophers, to know the Nature of Evil." But his own Account is, "That Matter is the Sub-"ject of all Evil, to which it adheres; That the "Evil in Things, neither formerly, nor at preſent, "nor for the future, can be more or leſs; for the "Nature of all things is alike, and the Generation "of Evil always the ſame." *Iamblichus* freely confeſſes that he knew not the Origin or Cauſe of it. In other Places, he produces it from thoſe Demons, who were by Nature wicked: Tho' in the Senſe of the *Greeks*, they were not wicked by Choice, but by

Orig. cont. Celſ. l. 4. p. 206.

De Myſt. § 4. c. 6. Id. c. 7.

Creation and Neceſſity. So that whilſt he would free the Gods from being the Cauſe of Evil, he di-
Id. c. 7. rectly makes them the Authors of it: Or elſe he imagines, that Evil proceeds from the different Parts, Powers, and Influences of the Univerſe; yet of theſe God is the Former.

So among Chriſtians, *Origen* complains, That if there be ſome Points more difficult than others, we may juſtly reckon among them this of the Origin of Evil. Reaſon has never yet anſwered, but rather entangled itſelf in the Scruples and Difficulties that ſpring up here: We have nothing to do but to acquieſce in Revelation: That *God made Man upright, but he ſought out many Inventions.* And tho' we are not able to comprehend the Rule of Divine Proceedings, yet we are aſſured, that he cannot act but with the moſt perfect Juſtice and Goodneſs, without running into thoſe Cautions and Niceties which learned Men are forced to uſe in the Explanation of theſe Points: That Sin cannot be ſaid abſolutely and ſimply to be from God, but only with this Addition or Limitation, that the Act, as it is a real Entity, is from God; Therefore God is not the Cauſe of Sin, but is the prime efficient Cauſe of the material entitative Act of Sin. What miſerable Jargon is Philoſophy, wading out of its Depths?

Is not the World ſtill divided about the Doctrine of Predeſtination, Free-Will, *&c.* each Sect accuſing the other of making God the Author of Sin, or of denying his Providence, and a thouſand other Reproaches, which they think inevitably attend every Hypotheſis but their own?

And if Nature, from the Contemplations of it, muſt be our Guide to ſupernatural Truths; yet what Truth in Nature is the moſt ſagacious Enquirer able to comprehend? The leaſt Occurrence gravels us: All our Reaſonings and Experience but ſlowly diſcover the Contrivance and Intrigues of Providence:

Nor

Nor can we thoroughly find out one thing in the Frame of Beings; they being made by a Knowledge ſo far ſuperior and tranſcendent to that of ours.

In the beloved Study of the Ancients, that of the Heavenly Bodies, thoſe ſureſt Guides to their Creator, their Diſcoveries were ſlow and inaccurate, and of their amazing Velocity, Diſtance, Magnitude, the Order, Laws, and Regularity of their Motion, more Diſcoveries have been made in the Space of two Centuries, than had been ſince the World began: And how many unknown Worlds, and Species of inviſible Creatures have the Teleſcope or Microſcope opened to the Moderns, that have enriched and extended their Knowledge of Nature, ſo vaſtly beyond that of former Ages?

Nay the clearer View of the Wiſdom of God in our own Frame, the Circulation of the Blood, the milky and lymphatick Veſſels, the Motion of the Heart, the Contexture of the Brain, on which our very Being and Life depends, and other things (without which the Mechanick Structure of the Bodies cannot be underſtood) are but lately brought to Light, the Diſcoveries of Yeſterday.

Will not the Rallery of the Woman to *Thales*, who fell into a Ditch, whilſt contemplating the Stars, ſuit all the Boaſters of Reaſon? *How ſhould you know what paſſes in the Heavens, when you ſee not what is juſt at your Feet?* If Nature be impenetrable, and its Springs only known to the Maker and Director of them; if we know ſo little of the leaſt of things, how much leſs, and with what more difficulty muſt we know any thing of the God of Nature? Is it reaſonable to believe that ſpiritual and immortal Subjects, are the only ones to be found out with Eaſe and Certainty by the wiſer Sort, but not ſo by the Commons of the World, who nevertheleſs are as much intereſted therein, as he that ſits in the Chair, or in the Senate? The whole is againſt Fact, againſt the

Experience and Obſervation of every Age; it is what Man never did; what he is under a Neceſſity of not doing.

To apply this (in the Words of a moſt learned Prelate) "It is very unfair in thoſe who deny the "Need and Expedience of a Divine Revelation, to "argue in favour of Reaſon, as if all Mankind were "*Philoſophers*, and every one had ſufficient Capa-"city, Leiſure and Inclination, to form a Scheme "of Duties for the Direction of his own Life. For "it is not enough to ſay, that there are learned "Men in the World, who are *able* to form ſuch "Schemes; ſince, whatever their own Ability may "be, they have no Right to *command* Aſſent and "Obedience from others; nor can any one ratio-"nally receive and embrace their Schemes, without "following them through the Chain of Reaſonings "upon which they are built, and judging whether "the Reaſonings will ſupport the Schemes. And "further (in caſe thoſe learned Men *differ*) without "judging which of them is in the Right, and which "in the Wrong: A Task that the Generality of "Mankind are as unequal to, as they are to the "framing the Schemes themſelves. And the Dif-"ficulty is ſtill greater, when we find the ſame Phi-"loſopher differing from himſelf, now advancing "one Opinion, and then again leaning to another; "at one time *clear* and *poſitive*, at another time "*doubtful* and *wavering*, upon the very ſame Point; "in which Caſe his Opinion on either ſide can "amount to no more in the Reſult, than to prove "him a Guide very unfit for the People to follow."

Bp Lond. 2d Paſtor. Let. p. 9.

To this Conſideration of human Reaſon, as the Inſtrument of Natural Religion, and which from the Authorities of the wiſeſt Men, ſeems inſufficient for ſo great a Task; ſome particular Circumſtances muſt be added, as neceſſarily ſuppoſed to attend the Perſon, who has the Uſe or Exerciſe of it.

Lord

Lord *Herbert* would have him one of very extraordinary Abilities, but who has received no external Informations, by Tradition, Revelation, or otherwiſe. His Lordſhip ſaw the Neceſſity of making ſuch a Demand, from the extraordinary Part that was to be acted; but could ſee none for the granting it to him in the preſent Controverſy.

But let us ſuppoſe ſome Perſon appearing in the World, in full Proportion of Body and Mind, *i. e.* with all his Parts and Faculties complete, as much accompliſhed as we can imagine any one to be, not improved by Conſideration and Experience, having no one to inſtruct him, nor any other Light whereby to diſcover any thing, but his own unaſſiſted Reaſon. The Queſtion is, Whether this Perſon, by the ſole Strength and Evidence of his own Mind, from contemplating himſelf, and what he ſees about him, could arrive to any *competent* Apprehenſion of a Firſt Cauſe of all theſe things? Whether he could in any tolerable meaſure or degree, by Conſideration of, and Reflection upon himſelf; or, by Collection and Inference from ſenſible Objects, find out that Being, who was the Author of all others, together with that Worſhip wherewith he ought to be honoured. If he could not, then it will follow, that the Exiſtence of a God could never be diſcovered by the Light of Nature only; and that Man either has not Reaſon, or has it to no purpoſe.

This is ſtated in their own Words; and we muſt make a few Obſervations upon them.

1. That it is always made a Poſtulatum, and taken for granted, that the Heathens did attain this Knowledge by the Help of Nature only. Which is begging the Queſtion, and falſe in fact; it being evident from all Hiſtory, and their own Confeſſion, that they had other Means of Inſtruction, much ſhorter than the Road of Nature, and much more explicit.

2. That if Man cannot make theſe Diſcoveries by Reaſon, he has it to no purpoſe, is an unjuſtifiable Expreſſion: For Man may have Reaſon to all the Purpoſes of his Being, though not to all the Counſels and Purpoſes of God: Man is eſſentially a dependent Creature in Mind and Body; his Mind is ſuitable to his Nature; and for a natural dependent Reaſon to diſcover Supernaturals, is not according to the Nature received; and therefore unnatural.

3. Nor is it a juſt Inſinuation to ſay (as *Puffendorf* does) That tho' 'tis very probable that the chief Heads of Natural Law were expreſly delivered by God Almighty to the firſt Mortals, and were from them communicated to others by Cuſtom and Inſtitution; yet the Knowledge of that Law may nevertheleſs be ſtyled Natural, inaſmuch as the neceſſary Truth and Certainty of it may be drawn from the Uſe of Natural Reaſon.

It is certain that all the Heads of it are in the higheſt manner agreeable to Reaſon, and what it will aſſent to as ſoon as proved: But as Natural Reaſon ſtands diſtinguiſhed from Revelation, it could not diſcern or prove the Truth of one of them, before it was otherwiſe manifeſted to it. And ſo his Argument ſuggeſts. God expreſly delivered them, which he need not have done, could Reaſon ſo certainly have known them without it; and that Knowledge did not come this way, is accounted for, by their being communicated to others by Cuſtom and Inſtitution.

4. Another Diſtinction not ſufficiently attended to, is betwixt the Light of Reaſon and the Law of it; for tho' Truth be the Object of the Mind, and all Law be Truth, yet all Truth is not Law, *i. e.* does not oblige. We aſſent to a thing as true, from ſenſible Evidence, or by diſcerning the Certainty of its Terms and Meaning. But to believe ſuch Truths to be a Law, we muſt go a great deal further, and know

know them to be the Will of ſome higher Power, who has a Right to exact Obedience; for Law neceſſarily induces an Obligation; and nothing can oblige but Power, which is only from the Will of a rightful Superior.

Reaſon is to enquire and determine concerning the Truth or Falſhood of things, which is a vaſt Province; therefore by no means uſeleſs or given in vain: For we cannot believe what is contrary to Reaſon, or what we do not perceive the Evidence of, nor any further than as we underſtand it. So neither can Obedience be neceſſary, till we diſcover (or have ſufficient Grounds ſo to do) the Connexion of ſuch with the Divine Will. But then, to know a thing to be true, and that it is the Command of God, ſuperinduces an Obligation not to be diſpenſed with. And here begin the Actings of Mens Conſciences: What before was only diſcurſive, now commences a judicial Faculty. But Reaſon, by ſeeing the Evidence of the Law, is no more a Law to the Mind than the Sun is to the Eye, or to its own Being or Motion, tho' by the help of it we ſee one, and are convinced of the other.

Let us now ſuppoſe this Perſon (or, if it be any Advantage, a College of ſuch) in a Solitude or State of Nature; making uſe of the ſeveral Means afforded him to diſcover the End of his Being, and conſider whether they are ſufficient to ſuch Purpoſe.

The Means generally aſſigned, are,

Firſt, The Works of Creation.

Secondly, His own Frame.

Thirdly, The Congruity and Fitneſs of Things.

Firſt then, Let him carefully obſerve the outward Frame of Things, the Courſe of the Rivers, the Flowing of the Sea, the Productions of the Vegetable World, the Number and Variety of the Creatures, the different Qualities of the Elements, the Viciſſitude of Times, the Motions of the heavenly Bodies, the regular Succeſſion of Light and

Darkneſs, the Riſing of the Stars, and the Return of Seaſons, the Renewing of the Bloom and Verdure of the Earth. That there is a conſtant Round of Things; a Death, and Reviviſcence in Nature, without any Alteration or real Decay, either in the Earth on which he dwells, or in the Roof of Heaven which he beholds, but all move in a regular Courſe and Order.

Such Obſervations would undoubtedly raiſe Aſtoniſhment and Admiration in his Mind: But if he could from thence learn a Deity, it would be a kind Piece of Inſtruction in thoſe who are Maſters of the Subject, to ſhew us where the Mind would ſet out, what Mediums it would take, and how advance Step by Step without Danger or Error; gradually overcoming the Imperfections of Nature, and the many Difficulties which conſtantly occur in ſuch Enquiries; till it broke through all that Darkneſs with which it is naturally ſurrounded, and opened a Way to the Throne of God.

The Fallacy which deceives ſo many, is not attending to the Difference between an aſſiſted and unaſſiſted Mind; and makes them ready to conclude, that becauſe we are able to do this by the Guidance of Revelation, that therefore an uniformed Mind would have taken the ſame Steps; which is boaſting of the Uſe of a Dark-lanthorn at Noonday; they are as different as Light and Darkneſs. It is an Argument that concludes nothing, becauſe impoſſible to be proved, therefore is not to be admitted or relied on.

But to return: Many Years muſt paſs in obſerving the Qualities of the Elements out of which all Things are compounded; the Nature of Things, their Manner of Exiſtence, Powers and Operations; what are their Intents and Purpoſes, what their Productions and Effects, their Appointment and End; by what ſteady Rules they act, in the long Chain and Subordination of Cauſes, how one is guided and overruled in the next,

next, that by a Superior, and ſo on, till he comes to the higheſt viſible Cauſe; for without this, he cannot have any Knowledge of viſible Objects, ſo as to enable his Underſtanding to proceed in further Enquiries.

And ſince Nature is ſo dark and obſcure, he muſt raiſe his Speculations from confuſed and inevident Notions to thoſe that are clear and evident: As alſo deſcend in this Science from Generals to Particulars. He muſt know the Cauſe and Original of the Diſpoſitions, Qualities, and Operations of Beings, and wherein their Perfection conſiſts: He muſt have a clear and accurate Diſcernment of the Origin and Generation of Things; the Conſtruction, Temperaments and Affections of Natural Bodies, their Gravity and Levity, Heat and Cold, Drineſs and Moiſture; he muſt with the cloſeſt View penetrate and unfold the hidden Springs of Nature, to what are owing Motion and Life, and from what Privation, Diſſolution come; he muſt be exactly acquainted with the Rules and Meaſures of Time and Motion, with the Situation, Figure, Order, Revolutions and Influence of the Heavenly Bodies; the Nature of Time, Place, and Quantity; with ten thouſand other Diſquiſitions, neceſſary to take in the vaſt Compaſs of the Univerſe, and ſearch them to the Bottom, ſo as to remove all Objection and arrive at Certainty, otherwiſe his whole Scheme would be but Imagination, and he could never trace out that Wiſdom and Deſign which muſt lead him to the Creator: For if there be Error in his Procedure, in his Reaſonings and Reflexions, they will bewilder him in that mighty Labyrinth, but never direct him to Truth.

Secondly, He muſt carefully obſerve the Operations of his Mind, how it apprehends, collects, compares and infers; what are the Meaſures and Degrees of Credibility, and fix ſome certain Rules to diſtinguiſh Truth from Falſhood; to determine concerning

cerning any Propoſition that offers itſelf, by diſcerning how far he is to give his Aſſent to it: For without ſome ſuch clear infallible Rule, he can never know what to believe or disbelieve, but muſt remain in perpetual Doubt and Suſpence, or by admitting falſe Principles wander in Error and Deluſion.

Thirdly, After an accurate View of Nature, he muſt apprehend the Harmony and Connexion of the whole, the Reaſons, Fitneſſes, and Congruity of Things, and thence collect ſuch Rules as are moſt agreeable to Right Reaſon, and proper to direct his Actions in ſuch a Manner, as is congruous and fitting to the Nature he enjoys, and to thoſe Ends and Purpoſes for which he muſt be intended.

Now if we conſider the ſlow Gradations by which all this muſt be accompliſhed, without any Monitor or Aſſiſtance, but Common Reaſon, ſuch as the greateſt Part of Mankind have, the Age of *Methuſelah* would not bring it to any tolerable Perfection; and ſince the united Labours of the World for thouſands of Years did not do it, we may ſafely pronounce it impoſſible to be done. All the Philoſophy of the Ancients could not ſettle one Principle in Nature; *Plutarch* and others have tranſmitted their Sentiments, which ſhew how divided they were in Opinion, how ſlender, imperfect, or falſe their utmoſt Knowledge was; and the Diſpute was never ſettled from whence Things had their Source, from Fire, Earth, Air, or Water; from Numbers, Atoms, Ideas, Plenum, Vacuum, Infinite, *&c.* Through a Courſe of ſo many Ages, there was no Certainty, no Demonſtration: Their Science was Opinion or Conjecture, and their Truth but Probability. What then could the Natural Man do, who was an abſolute Stranger to the Works of God, unacquainted with his own Original, and every Cauſe, with no Aſſiſtance but his own Reaſon and Obſervation?

And

And yet the arduous Labour is yet to come; after his utmoſt Attainments he is a free independent Creature, under no Reſtraint on his Liberty, Will, or Acting; for Truth however excellent would not lay an Obligation on him, till he perceives it to be the Will of a Superior Being; then it has the Force of a Law, and becomes a directive Rule of Life: For as God made Man a rational Creature, ſo did he alſo a free one, and his higheſt Freedom muſt conſiſt in the Right he has to judge of Things, according to his own View of them; and in the Caſe before us, it is impoſſible to be otherwiſe. A natural Man muſt judge for himſelf; nothing can conclude him but his own Reaſon: And however groundleſs or imaginary it may be, ſuch will be his Law: For no Man can believe contrary to his Conſcience, and that is modelled according to his own Sentiments of Truth.

So that from the Fitneſs and Agreeableneſs of natural Things, he muſt trace out the Exiſtence and Nature of a firſt ſupernatural Cauſe; and what Truths are ſo congruous to his Will, as to induce upon him an Obligation to obey them: And to make this Law effectual, he muſt be aſſured he has a Soul, that it is immortal, and after ſomething happens, which he is yet ignorant of, but what he may obſerve in other Creatures, Death; another thing will happen, which he never could obſerve or think of; that his dead Body ſhall live again, or his Soul ſubſiſt in a ſeparate State, and another World, which he is altogether ignorant of, and undergo what he never heard of, Everlaſting Happineſs or Miſery.

It is in vain to urge, That Reaſon can find out a little of God, a little of his Will, or Part of his Nature; to have a competent Apprehenſion of them, or in a tolerable Degree; thoſe Scales of Diminution to which Natural Religion always is reduced, when

when Men think ſeriouſly on it: For what do we underſtand of a Thing by knowing little or nothing of its Nature? It is a ſuperficial kind of Science, which being of little Uſe, there is no Cauſe for Nature to boaſt of it; nor do ſuch piece-meal Diſcoveries redound the leaſt to the Honour of the Author of Nature.

However, all the Stock of Materials he can lay in, to raiſe this mighty Superſtructure, are ſuch Collections and Inferences, as he can make from ſenſible Objects; the Imagination is furniſhed with Ideas by no other Inlet than the Senſes; except by Inſtruction, which is here not to be ſuppoſed. And let his Mind divide and reflect on Matter, never ſo often, it will be impoſſible to produce a Notion of an immaterial Object. And how from ſuch low contemptible Principles, by what Climax, what *Jacob*'s Ladder, he can rear his Imagination ſo high, as to look into Heaven; or bring what is inviſible and incomprehenſible, down to the Level of his Beholding, deſerves a ſerious Examination.

To prove the Sufficiency of Man for theſe things; there are two principal Arguments generally alledged.

The Firſt is, That the Being of God may be found out and demonſtrated from the Grandeur, Beauty, and Order of his Works; and the inviſible Things of him, his infinite Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs may be clearly ſeen and underſtood from the things which are made; and the Godhead, or his glorious Attributes and eſſential Perfections, are marked or fixed like an Impreſſion on a Seal, on the great Volume of the Univerſe, in ſuch large perſpicuous Characters, that whoever duly attends may plainly read them.

The Second is, That the Heathens, by the Uſe of theſe Means alone, did arrive at the Knowledge of God; his Exiſtence, Nature, and Providential Government

vernment of the World; and thence inferred the Neceſſity of Moral Duties, and the Obligation they were under to practiſe and obſerve them.

The firſt Argument is ſaid to receive great Confirmation from the latter, as being a pregnant Example and Illuſtration of it; and therefore may very properly be examined before it; for if the Heathens did not diſcover divine Things in this manner, it will amount to a Demonſtration that none ever did or can do it.

St. *Paul*, to whom we may appeal as a Scholar and a Gentleman, as freely as to a Philoſopher or Hiſtorian, is expreſly (as we have ſeen) of a contrary Opinion; *That in the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God.* In the admirable Effects of Creation and Providence, with all the worldly Wiſdom of Philoſophy they knew him not. But let us take Dr. *Clarke*'s Expoſition of theſe Words, 1 Cor. i. 21.

" That in fact Men, without the Aſſiſtance of " Revelation, did not attain to a right Knowledge " of God in any conſiderable Degree. For, as the " Eye, when put out, diſcerns the Light no more " than if it had never been at all framed to be an " Organ of Seeing; ſo when the Underſtanding is " darkened by vain Imaginations, *&c.* what wonder is it if Men, in a manner, ceaſe to know " him who is the Author of all Knowledge and " Underſtanding. *For it is God that teaches Man knowledge*, Pſ. xciv. 10. *And the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth him underſtanding*, Job xxxii. 8. And " the Philoſophers themſelves, in thoſe very Inquiries " wherein they profeſs themſelves to be moſt wiſe, " became Fools, and ſome argued themſelves out of " the Belief of the very Being of a God, *&c.*" Here Dr. *Clarke* tears up the very Roots of Natural Religion, in juſtly affirming that all divine Knowledge is immediately from God and his Inſpiration. Vol. II. Serm. 56. P. 372.

Nothing

Nothing can be clearer than this Paſſage of St. *Paul*, to the Purpoſe for which it is alledged: That what Knowledge the Heathens had of God, they did not attain it from the Conſideration of his Works; or that notwithſtanding all their Attention to his infinite Wiſdom in the Creation and Government of the World, they did not come to the Knowledge of the true God.

Hammond in Loc.

Nor does the Explanation ſome learned Men have given it in favour of the Natural Law, clear up the Difficulty they had a mind to remove. "They "knew him, ſay they (though the Apoſtle ſays they "knew him not) but obſcurely; but in a manner; "in no conſiderable Degree; and they knew him "not aright." But I hope it was not the Wiſdom of God, nor his Works, that led them into this obſcure wrong Knowledge of him: And what is an obſcure Knowledge? But where there is little Light or Evidence in the Mind, the Notions are confuſed, nothing perſpicuous, diſtinct, or clear, not able to diſtinguiſh one Object from another; or what is it to know a thing not aright, but to have falſe Conceptions of it, no Agreement between the Object and the Idea? what in Nature is true, becomes Falſhood in them. There is no Conformity between the Apprehenſion, and the thing to be apprehended; if this be true, the other inevitably muſt be falſe; ſo to know God not aright, is to know (as the *Athenians* did) a God, that was unknown to them: But to have the Name of a thing without the Meaning, to know a thing by a Nature, Qualities, and Operations eſſentially contrary to it, is to know nothing of it, and becomes another Manner of expreſſing the utmoſt Ignorance.

Clarke vol. 2d p. 366.

And yet it is much to be lamented, that we cannot fix the Original of this Knowledge, bad as it is; that we have no Footſteps of ſuch Diſcoveries; and

and that the Abettors of Natural Religion will not tell us, by whom, and in what Age it was done; for ſurely the Name of ſo ſagacious a Perſon would have been ſacred to all Poſterity; but they are willingly ſilent on this Point, and ſo is Antiquity; all it declares is, that Religion was what they received from their Forefathers, or borrowed from other Colonies or Schools. And let any one Age be pitched upon, and I will undertake to ſhew a precedent one knew as much, till we gradually riſe to the firſt Diſperſion of Mankind. And as to the later *Greeks* who imported a new Stock of Learning among their ignorant Countrymen; they are not ſo vain as to attribute it to Nature or themſelves, but ingenuouſly own whence they had thoſe Principles, ſo different from, and nobler than any their Fathers had been acquainted with.

And if ſtudying the Works be the Method of knowing the Workman, it is ſomewhat myſterious, that theſe laſt Ages which have ſo vaſtly improved Natural Philoſophy, ſhould have made no new Diſcoveries in the Divine Nature; which is neither more nor leſs than it was before, juſt ſo far as God revealed it, and no human Mind can carry it further; yet we ſee every Day in theſe Studies freſh Reaſons to admire his Wiſdom, and adore his Power; but not to add to his Nature or Perfections.

And what wholly enervates this Argument is, that notwithſtanding the many Diſcoveries the World has been bleſſed with, of the Appearances of Nature; yet the plaineſt of them are abſtruſe and perplexing, not one Point ſo determined, but there is room for doubt. Though the Method of accounting for ſome Phænomena be highly probable, no one can ſay he has a clear Perception of them, nor can demonſtrate the Laws whereby they act; but there are Millions of Appearances and

Deſigns

Deſigns in Nature, that we can give no tolerable account of; the Powers and Operations of which are altogether inviſible and unknown. And to ſay that viſible Effects which cannot direct us to their own inviſible imperceptible Cauſes, ſhould be Teachers of the inviſible Godhead, is prepoſterous and abſurd. Nature is the Work of God, and till we can reach her hidden Springs and Deſigns, it is irrational to think of piercing what lies ſo vaſtly beyond them, the inviſible Perfections of the Workman. It is making the ſame Cauſe able to produce the greater, but not the leſſer Effect.

To convince us how ſandy a Foundation this Argument is, we need only look back and obſerve how many Ages were ſpent, what Force of long and ſevere Study was uſed, before Men were able to form the firſt Draught of an univerſal Syſtem: What was this owing to, but the not diſcerning the Reaſon and Manner of the grand Appearances in Nature? and to pretend Demonſtration from Principles unknown, is the Effect of Ignorance or Pride.

And why ſhould we imagine that to be ſo eaſily done, which by the Acknowledgment of the Maintainers of Reaſon never was done? This very Point, the Foundation of Natural Religion, nonplus'd the Wits of the World, they knew nothing of it; and they attributed Creation to Chance, Matter, Combination of Atoms, Laws of Motion, *&c.* to every thing but what they ought to have done. And theſe few Words, *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*, contain more true Wiſdom than all their Volumes of Philoſophy.

But the Works of God had an Effect quite contrary to what they are produced to ſupport; inſtead of leading Men to know the inviſible things of God by their natural Light and Reaſon; their very Reaſonings and Speculations on them, led

Men to form the moſt fabulous and extravagant Opinion of Things: And inſtead of drawing that Concluſion which the Apoſtle ſhews they ought, *Heb.* xi. 3. *That the things which are ſeen, were not made by thoſe things which do appear*, they did conclude them to be the Work of viſible Cauſes, not of an inviſible Agent. And though among many great traditional Truths, they had this of Creation, yet by attempting to give Reaſons for it, they utterly confounded it, and introduced a Set of falſe and idle Phyſiological Speculations.

" If theſe things (ſays a learned Author) were Shuck-
" diſcoverable by Reaſon, and brought to Light ford.
" by a due Courſe of thinking, and then related
" to their Children; what were the Traces of this
" Reaſoning? where to be found? or, how were
" they loſt? 'Tis ſtrange theſe things ſhould be ſo
" obvious at firſt, that an early Attempt ſhould
" diſcover ſo much Truth, and that all the Wit
" and Learning that came after, for five or ſix
" thouſand Years, ſhould, inſtead of improv-
" ing it, only puzzle and confound it. If *Adam*,
" or ſome other Perſon of extraordinary Learning,
" had by a Chain of Reaſoning brought theſe
" Truths into the World, ſome Hints or other of
" the Argument would have remained, as well as
" the Truths produced by it; or ſome ſucceeding
" Author would, at one time or other, have rea-
" ſoned as fortunately as his Predeceſſor: But no-
" thing of this ſort happened; inſtead of it we
" find, that the early Ages had a great Stock of
" Truths, which they were ſo far from having
" Learning enough to invent or diſcover, that
" they could not ſo much as give a good Account
" of the true Meaning of many of them. A due
" Conſideration of which muſt lead us to believe,
" that God at firſt revealed theſe things unto Men,
" acquainted them with what he had done in the

" Creation of the World, which they communica-
" ted to their Children's Children." It cannot be accounted for any other way; it is what Fact, Hiſtory, and the State of their Knowledge obliges us to believe of them.

When the firſt Planters of the World had forgot every thing of the God of their Forefathers but the Name of ſuch a Being; had no Inſtructors but the Painting of the Fields, the Flowing of the Sea, the Motions of the Heavens, and the Reflexions they could make upon themſelves; their Time conſumed in the neceſſary Toil of clearing the Ground, and making Proviſion for a miſerable Support: Thouſands of Years muſt have paſſed, before they could have formed ſuch a Body of Philoſophy, and Knowledge of the Works of God, as thence to infer the Neceſſity of his Exiſtence, or the Perfections of his Nature. And why may we not conclude, that if God had not made a Revelation, they would never have reaſoned nor thought of him at all; ſince notwithſtanding the Stock of Knowledge they once had, they could not retain in their Minds any juſt Notions of him; but turned them into a Lye, Figments and Fables of their own Invention? And when Knowledge again increaſed in the World, the very Contemplation of viſible things fixed their Admiration there, and hindered their Aſcent to the Author and Maker of them.

Which will no way ſeem incredible to one that obſerves what happens in his own Days: That a curious Inſpection into the Art and Mechaniſm of Nature has too frequently been a Prejudice to Faith; keeping the Eye conſtantly upon earthly things, creates a Diffidence of the heavenly ones; and too high a Refinement upon the Knowledge of the Creature, has made Men weak and doubtful as to Faith in the Creator.

Nor

Nor is the whole more improbable than it is impoſſible; for a Pagan ignorant of the Supreme Being, to make this quick Tranſition, to know the Agent by the Act, and from the viſible World behold divine Inviſibility. *Ariſtotle* would have asked ſuch Naturaliſts, what indelible Character the Heavens and Earth had of being created; for there is no Geometrical Method whereby Reaſon could proceed from Principle to Principle, from Propoſition to Propoſition, as to conclude in that manner. If it be asked why, the Anſwer is, Becauſe no created Mind ever did or can paſs that Gulph, from Nothing to Something, how Nothing was brought into Exiſtence and became Something; to bring theſe Extremes together, and reconcile Terms ſo infinitely diſtant, which no Power leſs than Infinite can effect; theſe are Acts ſolely of Omnipotence, and therefore Omnipotence only is the Meaſure of them; and to ſay that Man could apprehend, that Non-entity was carried into Being, and thus to meaſure the Almighty's Magnitude, is no more than carnal Pride, and Man making himſelf God; he that can go thus far, can alſo tell us, what God did before the World was made.

Plato, I am ſure, diſclaims all this Arrogance. "When we ſpeak, ſays he, of the Nature of God, "and the Creation of the Univerſe, we ought to "be content, if what we offer be but probable; for "more than that is not to be required: For it "muſt be remembred that I who ſpeak, and you "who are Hearers, are but Men; and if we can "only attain ſome probable Fable or Tradition of "theſe things, περὶ τούτων τ εἰκότα μῦθον, we may "not enquire further about them." Timæus, p. 29.

After having taken a View of the Inſufficiency both of the Inſtrument and Means of Knowledge, I come to conſider more particularly the *Second* Argument, generally urged in ſupport of Natural Religion,

ligion, That the Supreme Being may be evidently known by the Works of Creation, *&c.* A Subject always opened with the greateſt Triumph of Eloquence and Pomp of Words; as if the Sun and Moon were as faithful Preachers of the Law of Nature, as they are Signs for Seaſons and Days and Years.

This muſt be confeſſed a ſoothing kind of Philoſophy, as flattering the Mind, and greatly advancing the Dignity of human Nature; therefore eaſily admitted, though void of any Support from Scripture or Experience; and what I muſt be aſſured is falſe, though a thouſand *Alexandrian* or *Vatican* Libraries affirmed the contrary.

The Spirit of God ſays expreſly, *That through Faith we underſtand that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God*, Heb. xi. 3. ῥήματι Θεοῦ, not the Λόγῳ, but what it generally ſignifies, the Will, Decree, Order, and Command of God, without any Counſel or Aſſiſtance, without any Help or Materials prepared; but only, Let it be ſo, and it was ſo. The Words want no Comment, *Faith is the Subſtance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not ſeen*, ver. i. an Aſſent to a thing as credible, upon the Teſtimony of God, whoſe Relation is infallible; Reaſon therefore could never ſo much as have known that the Worlds were created, had not God communicated it. And there cannot be a greater Abſurdity than to ſay, Man can find out God by the Works of Creation, yet cannot find out that Creation is the Work of God. Which was exactly the Caſe of the old Heathens, who never could determine who formed the World, nor when, nor how, nor out of what it was made.

But God revealed it as a Truth neceſſary to his rational Creatures: By this we underſtand, and are fully perſuaded of its Truth. And as Faith is the Evidence of things not ſeen, that is the only Knowledge

ledge we have of God whom no Man hath ſeen: Or in other Words, he could not have been known, unleſs he had manifeſted himſelf. This is the Demonſtration of the firſt Cauſe, and Origin of things, which Pagan Philoſophy ſo earneſtly longed for, but never attained.

St. *Peter*, 2d *Epiſtle* iii. 5. declares the ſame, *That by the Word of God, the Heavens were of old.* But an omnipotent *Fiat*, a creative Word, a ſpeaking things into Being, is above the reach of created Minds; what Reaſon cannot poſſibly unfold; nor to be inferred from any ordinary Manifeſtation of divine Workings and Power in Cauſes or Effects: But is altogether extraordinary, ſupernatural, myſterious and a hidden Act of Volition and Omnipotence, *i. e.* of the very Eſſence; what therefore no created Intellect could diſcover, what it never did; there being no Philoſopher who did not hold an eternal firſt Matter.

Is it not then to be feared, that *the Religion of Nature* draws the Abilities of the human Mind vaſtly above the Standard of Nature, in affirming that of all, which no one did attain, but by the Spirit and Power of God? But let us take care that whilſt we exalt the Creature, we intrench not on the Prerogative of the Creator. And the Caution of a very learned Perſon becomes neceſſary here; while the Mind of Man keeps within its own proper Sphere, it acts with Security; but when once it ſtrives to exert it ſelf beyond its native Powers and Faculties, then it ſinks into Weakneſs and Infirmity, and is ever liable to endleſs Error and Miſtake: It hath no direct Perception, or immediate Conſciouſneſs beyond things ſenſible and human: So that in all its nobleſt Efforts, and moſt lofty Flights, it muſt ever have a ſteady Eye to the Earth, from whence it took its Riſe; and always conſider that it mounts upward with bor-

rowed Wings; for when once it preſumes upon their being of its own natural Growth, and attempts a direct Flight to the heavenly Regions; then it falls headlong to the Ground, where it lies groveling in Superſtition or Infidelity.

Creation is the Prerogative of God, what none can imitate, a Work proper and peculiar to him that is higher than the higheſt: And becauſe he revealed it to us as a moſt prevailing Motive to apprehend his Greatneſs, dread his Power, admire his Wiſdom, rely on his Providence; and thence learn to whom only our Adorations, our Prayers, and our Praiſes ought to be directed: Let us not aſſume this Glory to ourſelves, and aſcribe that Information to Man, which could not poſſibly come from any but God: It being to unaſſiſted Reaſon, altogether unintelligible and incomprehenſible, and therefore could not have been known without a Teacher.

Nor do I know one Paſſage in Scripture, which intimates that God intended his Works, as the Means whereby Men were to come to a Knowledge of his Exiſtence; as it is certain he did not leave them to ſuch an embarraſſing Method, but manifeſted himſelf to the World, at various Times, and in ſundry Manners. And wherever the Works of Omnipotence are appealed to, it is to ſhew the Greatneſs, not the Being of God; to diſplay his ſupereminent Majeſty and Dignity; and thereby diſpoſe Men to a reverential Dread and Awe of him: So the Pſalmiſt always uſes it, *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Hoſt of them by the Breath of his Mouth.* Whence he draws this Inference: *Let all the Earth fear the Lord, let all the Inhabitants of the World ſtand in awe of him; for he ſpake and it was done, he commanded and it ſtood faſt.*

Pſ. xxxiii. 6.

The

The ſame is affirmed by *Moſes* of Miracles, the Signs and Wonders which God ſhewed on the Deliverance of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, Deut. iv. 35, 36. *That they might know that the Lord he is God, and that there is none elſe beſides him. Out of Heaven he made thee to hear his Voice, that he might inſtruct thee.* It is urged to make them put their whole Truſt and Dependence upon him. *Ye are the Bleſſed of the Lord, which made Heaven and Earth, put your Truſt in the Lord. Happy is he whoſe Hope is in the Lord his God, who made Heaven and Earth, the Sea and all that is therein.* To diſpoſe them to all Acts of Worſhip and Adoration. *The Sea is his, and he made it, and his Hands formed the dry Land: O come let us bow down and worſhip.* To aſcribe Thankſgiving and Honour to him only: *For he alone doth great Wonders, by his Wiſdom he made the Heavens, O give Thanks unto the God of Heaven.* And *Nehemiah* in his ſolemn Faſt: *Stand up and bleſs the Lord your God for ever and ever. Thou haſt made Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, with all their Hoſt, the Earth and all Things that are therein, &c. And thou preſerveſt them all, and the Hoſt of Heaven worſhippeth thee.* To declare his Supereminence to thoſe who were ignorant of him: *Tell it among the Heathen, that the Lord he is King, and that it is he who hath made the round World ſo faſt, that it cannot be moved.* And above all to warn them againſt Idolatry: *For among the Gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any Works like unto thy Works.* By this (as hath been ſhewn) he diſtinguiſhes himſelf, and ſhews the Vanity of Idols; and warns them not to learn the Ways of the Heathens, who *are brutiſh and fooliſh, the Stock is a Doctrine of Vanities, Molten Images are the Work of Errors; In the Time of their Viſitation they ſhall periſh.*

Pſ. cxv. 15. Pſ. cxlviii. Pſ. xxviii. 8. Pſ. cxxviii. 8. Pſ. xcv. Pſ. cxxxvi. Neh. ix. 5. 6. Pſal. xcvi. 10. Pſal. lxxxvi. 8. Jer. x.

This was the Character which ſtruck the greateſt Awe, and moſt effectually expoſed the Wickedneſs and Folly of going after ſtrange Gods; And theſe Acts of Omnipotence are in every Part of Scripture repeated, to make Men know, and conſider in their Hearts, *That the Lord he is God, in Heaven above, and upon the Earth beneath, there is none elſe.* Deut. xxxiv. 39. *See now, that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me, neither is there any that can deliver out of my Hands.* If. xliv. 8. *Ye are even my Witneſſes, is there a God beſides me? yea there is no God, I know not any; For he is the Lord that maketh all Things. But they ſhall all go to Confuſion together that are Makers of Idols. They have no Knowledge, that ſet up the Wood of their graven Image, and pray unto a God that cannot ſave.* If. xlv. 16, 20, 22. *Therefore, Look unto me, and be ye ſaved all the Ends of the Earth, for I am God, and there is none elſe. He is God of Gods, Lord of Lords, a great God, mighty and terrible, which regardeth not Perſons, nor taketh Reward.* Deut. x. 17.

So this Attribute of Omnipotence is deſcribed by thoſe glorious Epithets of Almighty, the Lord of Hoſts, of *Sabaoth* (*i. e.* of the Armies and Powers in Heaven and Earth) *Elſhaddai*, ſignifying the Rule and Dominion which God hath over all, and the Strength, Force, and Power by which he is able to perform all Things. And upon the Right of Creation doth juſtly challenge that of Dominion, *I have made the Earth, and created Man upon it*, Iſaiah xlv. 12. He can frame any thing as it pleaſeth him; and whatever he makes, properly belongs to him, as the Lord and Maſter; that he can diſpoſe of it according to his Pleaſure. Becauſe he creates, he muſt have an abſolute and unlimited Government, Rule, and Dominion over all Things.

This is the conſtant Uſe made of it by the inſpired Writers, not to prove there is a God, but

to

to ſhew how great that God is, whoſe all Things are, both in Right and Poſſeſſion, by Supremacy and Dominion: That from the Contemplation of his Works, they might be excited to admire that Wiſdom which contrived, to adore that Power which produced, and to praiſe that Goodneſs which preſerves the whole Creation: Theſe are manifeſt Proofs, that his Nature is immenſe and infinite, his Authority ſupreme and abſolute, his Power univerſal and unlimited, his Godhead and Glory admirable over all his Works.

For God's being our Maker, is the higheſt Proof of his Right to our Worſhip and Adoration; that it is the greateſt Wickedneſs to offer Homage to the Creature, which can be only due to the one great and infinite Creator, whom alone we are to ſerve and pleaſe. Thus the glorious Inhabitants of Heaven that attend upon the Throne of God, when they worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever, make Omnipotence the Subject of their divine Adorations: *Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power, for thou haſt created all Things, and for thy Pleaſure they are and were created.* And this his faithful Servants upon Earth have always imitated in their Hymns of Praiſe: *The Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us. Be thankful unto him, and bleſs his Name.* So *David*, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. The *Levites*, Neh. ix. 6. *Hezekiah*, Iſaiah xxxvii. 16, *&c.*

For what greater Power can there be, than to make the Heaven and the Earth out of Nothing; the Millions of Powers that are in the Heavens above, the admirable Variety of Faculties found on the Earth below? Is there any Wiſdom like unto his, who in ſo manifold a Work made nothing ſuperfluous or vain, and appointed to all Things the beſt Means to attain their End, a Law and Rule which they ſhould obſerve? What Goodneſs

ſo

ſo unſpeakable as to make every thing Good, and afford them ſufficient Aid to their Happineſs and Perfection? Such is the admirable Power, the incomparable Wiſdom, the unſpeakable Goodneſs of him that made the Heavens and the Earth. *But thoſe Gods which made them not, ſhall periſh.* He alone therefore is Almighty, Wiſe and Good; he alone is to be adored and worſhipped: *For thus ſaith the Lord that created Jacob, and that formed Iſrael, before me there was no God formed, neither ſhall there be after me; I, even I am the Lord, and beſide me there is no Saviour.*

Iſ. xliii. 1, 10, 11.

This I conceive to be the true Application of ſuch Paſſages in Scripture; and wiſh learned Men would conſider whether a Miſtake has not generally run through the Uſe of them in this Argument: Whether *Moſes*, and the Pſalms, and the Prophets did not always direct them to thoſe who were well inſtructed in the Exiſtence of a Deity, which was therefore an Article they needed not, nor did attempt to prove? Whether all all thoſe with whom the Apoſtles reaſoned in this manner, did not acknowledge a Supreme Being, though they did not know the true one; and conſequently the Intent of repreſenting him under this diſtinguiſhing Character, was to turn them from Idols to ſerve the Living God, which made the World and all Things therein? and no Attribute could ſo effectually demonſtrate the Tranſcendency of his Nature above the Gods of the World, as that of Creation, which the Heathens had never applied to their Deities. And wherein every thing they ſaw was a ſenſible Proof of the Majeſty of the Godhead; whatever they obſerved in the Providential Government of the World, was a Memorial and Exhibition of infinite Wiſdom or Power, of Juſtice or Puniſhment.

From

From this they appeal to Common Reaſon, whether he who dwelleth in the Heavens could be confined in Temples? Whether a Being inviſible and incorporeal could be repreſented by material Things, and the Framer of the Univerſe by the moſt ignoble Parts of it, Stocks, Stones, and Reptiles? From this Topick every Article of Idolatry appears moſt unreaſonable and unnatural. For of theſe things the ordinary Underſtanding of Mankind, on hearing the Terms explained, is a competent Judge; to Men convinced of the Exiſtence, and inſtructed in the Divine Nature, the Senſes will diſcover innumerable Notices of ſuch infinite Perfections, as cannot with any Propriety be attributed to another: Yet in this the Heathens erred; wherefore the Works of Creation were urged to them, as Leſſons to furniſh their Minds with Apprehenſions more ſuitable to his Nature, than they had conceived.

So that this Argument does no Service to the Cauſe of Natural Theology, but to throw a Miſt before the Eyes of unwary Readers: That the Creator's Name is written in Golden Characters on every Page of the Book of Nature; that the whole Univerſe is but a viſible Map or Picture of the Inviſible Deity; that we can no ſooner open our Eyes, but we may behold the glorious Ideas of his Divine Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs; that Heaven and Earth are his Preachers; and that their Light, if duly followed, will direct and guide us to the Eternal one: That the Motions and Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, the Variety, Order, and Beauty of the Creatures, the Connexion and Correſpondence of the whole Syſtem, according to the different Rank of Beings, ſuited to their ſeveral Capacities and Spheres; the Direction of all things to an End, and the fitting them with Parts and Inſtruments adapted beſt to the obtaining that End; and

above

above all, the ſuperior Formation of Man. Theſe are all obvious to our Senſes, and a viſible Manifeſtation of ſome Self-originated and Eternal Cauſe, the Author of all others, and who alone can produce, govern, and uphold things, with that Power, Order, and Wiſdom, which every one muſt obſerve in the Direction of the Univerſe.

Whence it is concluded, that there is a Natural Theology, or a Religion to be derived from Natural Principles; and that whoever do not attain ſuch Knowledge, wilfully pervert their Reaſon, or darken, and by wicked Practices extinguiſh that Light, which God gave on purpoſe to make them know and worſhip him: And that they who do not, reduce themſelves to a lower Condition of Stupidity than the Beaſts that periſh.

Yet how high ſoever Nature and Reaſon are magnified on theſe Occaſions, there are few learned Writers on the Subject, who have not made ſuch Conceſſions, as wholly enervate the Uſe of them; and, after ſeriouſly conſidering the Weakneſs and Limits of Human Underſtanding, are forced to confeſs with *Ariſtotle*, That it is diſpoſed even towards firſt Beings, and thoſe moſt manifeſt by Nature, juſt as Bats are towards the Light: And if ſuch be the Condition of the Princes among Men in Wiſdom, what can the rude and uninformed do? They who ſit in the Land of Darkneſs and Shadow of Death, blinded with Senſe, and dead in Luſt and Sin; I may ſay Man in general, who is bid to go to the Piſmire, to the Stork in the Heaven, to the Turtle, the Crane, and the Swallow, and even to the Lilies of the Field, for Inſtruction in Divine Knowledge.

When Man views the numberleſs Species of Creatures that are below him in Degrees of Perfection, he is apt to be exalted with his own Self-ſufficiency: But when he looks upwards, and ſees how much further he is removed from the Infinite Being of God;

when

when he conſiders the Heavens, even the Work of his Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which he hath ordained, filled with Wonder at the Divine Wiſdom and Mercy, and abaſhed at his own Ignorance and Weakneſs, is forced to cry out, *Lord! What is Man that thou art ſo mindful of him?*

We are told indeed of a Ladder, a Scale of Beings, by which the Underſtanding may aſcend to God: And yet, alas! the firſt Step in this Ladder is beyond the Reach of our Strength and Capacities. Creative Omnipotence is the very Ground-work of theſe Contemplations, on which every Part depends, and from which alone the Mind can raiſe itſelf to larger Proſpects and further Diſcoveries: Yet we have ſeen Creative Omnipotence, or what the Production or Emiſſion of Matter into Being is, never entered into the Heart of Man to conceive; no Mage or wiſe Man ever thought of it; or if they had, they would have laughed at the Incredibility and Impoſſibility of ſuch a Notion. If there was one, let us be told who he is; if there was not, Creation, or Created Beings, could not lead Men to the Knowledge of God; and the whole Structure erected on this Suppoſition, is without Juſtice, Foundation, or Truth. The firſt Link of this Chain that hangs down from Heaven, is out of View; and without this, all the reſt are uſeleſs. A Creator without a Power to create, is to be, and not to be; and Contradictions will never teach the Truths of a Divine Nature. No Philoſophy but that which is Divine, ever taught that God was the Efficient Cauſe of Matter, and nothing beſides him, Eternal: And they who would aſcend by a material Scale to the Divine Nature, ſpeak as the Men at *Babel: Let us make Brick, and build a City and a Tower, whoſe Top may reach unto Heaven.* But ſuch Attempts have always been confounded.

I am

I am not therefore apprehenſive of Danger or Error from this Concluſion: That through the whole Scriptures the Works of God are never ſo propoſed, as that the World might, or did thereby find out God (for they neither found him nor knew him) but only that to thoſe who are already acquainted with that great Truth, they are a ſenſible Evidence, the moſt noble Demonſtration that can be offered, of his inviſible Perfections, *even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

Then the ſtupendous Frame of the World, its Stability and Variety, the vaſt Orbs above, and the leaſt Production below, in the ſmalleſt Inſect, and every Flower in the Field, is a Pſalm of Praiſe; ſince by the Greatneſs and Beauty of the Creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is ſeen. The Clemency of the Air, the Influence and Subſervience of the Elements, the Change of Times and Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs, all its Comforts and Benefits conſpiring to the Good and Happineſs of Man, make us bleſs that merciful Providence by which they are ſo ſteadily directed.

In this Senſe, and no other, the vaſt Expanſion of Heaven, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, their regular Motions, Courſe, and Order, teach and proclaim the infinitely great Author and wiſe Diſpoſer of them. To this purpoſe does the Pſalmiſt ſummon the *whole Creation, the Dragons, and all Deeps, Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapours, Storms and Winds, Beaſts, and all Cattle, creeping things and flying Fowl, to magnify him*, which they do by fulfilling his Word, performing his Pleaſure, and obeying his Commands. And in thus anſwering the Ends for which he deſigned them, they ſilently praiſe him, and leave all rational Creatures without Excuſe who do not the ſame.

Thus thoſe memorable Words, *Pſal.* xix. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth*

ſheweth his Handywork, are undoubtedly true, to *David* who was a Friend of God, and to every religious *Jew:* For this Pſalm was directed to the Chief Muſician, to be ſung in the Publick Aſſemblies, and intended purely for the Uſe of the *Jewiſh* Church. *Day unto day uttereth Speech, and Night unto Night ſheweth Knowledge: There is no Speech nor Language where their Voice is not heard.* Surely this Expreſſion is figurative: But though they have neither Speech, nor Voice, nor Words, yet they have other and more effectual Ways of diſplaying the Divine Attributes; whereby they ſpeak much louder, and direct Men to juſt Apprehenſions of the Deity, more effectually than any Teacher on Earth can do. But if underſtood literally, as Declarers of the Exiſtence of God, they muſt alſo be ſo underſtood, of a ſaving Faith in Chriſt; for thus they are directly applied by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* x. 18. which is proving too much; *that being a Myſtery hidden in God*, which no created Being, much leſs the things which are ſeen, could poſſibly reveal.

The Gradation, which is here remarkable, fully explains both the Paſſages: *They cannot call on him, in whom they have not believed: Nor believe in him of whom they have not heard: Nor hear without a Preacher: Nor one be a Preacher, except he be ſent. So Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God. But I ſay, have they not heard? Yea verily, their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.* Here is noted the Impoſſibility to have Faith, or a Belief in God, without Inſtruction; and the only Means of Inſtruction is the Word of God, and not the Voice of his Works, which never could diſcover him, but are a noble Atteſtation of him when revealed.

And this he applies to the *Gentiles*, and repeats a Prophecy of *Iſ.* lxv. 1. concerning the Call of them: *I am ſought of them that asked not for me; I am found*

found of them that ſought me not; I was made manifeſt unto them that asked not after me. The Heathens neither knew God, nor asked, nor enquired after him: But when the Time of their Calling to the Church was come, he would ſend Preachers to inſtruct them in whom to believe, and extend to them the only Means of ſaving Knowledge, the Word and Will of God.

Or if it be underſtood of ſpreading the Goſpel by the Miniſtry of the Apoſtles, that it was preached to every Creature under Heaven; then it enforces the Neceſſity of Inſtruction, and conſequently could not be applicable by St. *Paul* in a Senſe directly contrary to the Pſalmiſt, ſince both wrote by the Guidance of the ſame unerring Spirit. And herein there is no Difference between the *Jew* and the *Greek*; *but the ſame Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

Such are the uſual Forms of Speech with the inſpired Writers, to expreſs an univerſal Acknowledgment of God's Dominion and Praiſe; *The Heavens ſhall praiſe thy Wonders, O Lord*, Pſal. lxxxix. 5. *And the Heavens declare his Righteouſneſs, for God is Judge himſelf. Hear O my People, and I will ſpeak*, Pſal. l. 6. Yet it never was imagined, that they inſtructed the World in a future Judgment; which however, by this Method of interpreting, would be as legible in the Book of Nature, as the Divine Exiſtence: And ſuch Summons of the Works of God are the conſtant Language of the Prophets. *Hear, O Heaven, and give ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath ſpoken*, Iſaiah i. 9. *And the Beaſts of the Field, the Dragons and the Owls ſhall honour me*, Iſaiah xliii. 20. Yet as God intended nothing in vain, if theſe by his Appointment were the Teachers of Divine Truths, all the rational Creatures of God would have been inſtucted in them, or the Means had not anſwered the End: Which is ſo far from being true, that

all

all (except the *Jews*) were ignorant of him: And therefore the Author of Nature never determined them to ſuch Purpoſes.

Nay, they always had an oppoſite Effect, which is no way reconcilable with the Meaſures of Providence, that its Works ſhould regularly produce Effects quite contrary to the Purpoſes of their Creation: Yet ſo it was, thoſe Works which the preſent Age ſays lead the World to God, always led them to the groſſeſt Idolatry. No ſooner did Human Wiſdom receive the leaſt Advancement, but its Contemplations were directed to the Study of the Heavenly Bodies, their Beauty, Order, Motion, Influence and Government: But Men were ſo far ſtruck with Admiration, that they ſtopped here; acquieſced in the apparent Wiſdom and Power they obſerved in viſible Objects, without ever enquiring for an Efficient Cauſe; firſt neglected, and then rejected the Notion of a Creator, as a Being unknown and inviſible to their carnal Minds.

And from ſuch Admiration of their excellent Glory, ſtupendous Frame, beautiful Structure, regular Order, and powerful Influence, they immediately began to call and think the Sun, Moon, and Hoſt of Heaven to be God; fell down in Adoration, and made them the ultimate Object of their Worſhip, their *Uranus*, their *Jupiter*, their moſt High. It was this firſt Study of Philoſophy or worldly Wiſdom, that removed the Fences of true Religion, and let in an Inundation of Idolatry upon the Reaſon and Minds of Men. Theſe were the early Gods of *Chaldea* and *Egypt*; ſo vain are the Imaginations of Man when he relies upon himſelf. Their boaſted Knowledge in Aſtronomy was ſo far from directing their Minds, by a Conſideration of viſible Beings, to an Acknowledgment of the inviſible Glories of the Godhead, that it for ever ſhut out ſuch ſerious Thoughts, in aſcribing the Glory of the Uncreated

God to Created Nature; and became the Groundwork of Impiety, Polytheism, and Atheism, to all succeeding Ages.

And I think this Argument wants no other Confutation than the Manner in which it is urged by those very Persons, who introduced it as a Support of the Law of Nature. *Natalis Comes* says, "That "there were no Nations, however barbarous, that "did not think there were Gods, that the World "was created and governed by a Providence; yet "few were so hardy as to introduce any Gods but "what they received from others." That they believed the World created (or *non fortuitò genitum*) is too false to deserve an Answer: Or what was the Consequence of their believing Creation, and a Providence? Why, not to have Apprehensions of one God, or admit any but what they received from others; and so they worshipped the first Star, Stock or Stone, they found their ignorant Neighbours adored. And in a few Lines after he adds, "That almost all People and Nations "first agreed in this Opinion, *To look upon the Hea-*"*venly Bodies as Gods.*" Lord *Herbert* agrees in the same, that they first worshipped the Stars; but affirms, that this led them to the Knowledge of the Supreme God. By which Rule, Falshood is the Road to Truth; and Idolatry, or worshipping false Gods, is the School for Men to learn the true One. Surely a Cause must be weak, if not desperate, that stands in need of such Arguments.

Mythol. l. 1. c. 7. p. 10.

Relig. Gent. l. 1. c. 2. p. 11.

But all this is an utter Degradation of the Deity, and impossible to happen, were there any Mark, Idea, or Signature of God set upon his Works: And in such case, the World, learning under one and the same Master, would certainly agree in some common Notions and Apprehensions of him. Yet go among any People, and you will find the Notions they have of a Supreme Being, to be no more than

than the bare Opinion of their Teacher, without any Reſemblance of the true God; which were impoſſible, if theſe were the Characters whereby he would manifeſt himſelf.

If indeed there be any Symbols of the Deity more beautiful or eloquent than others; any viſible Objects more amazing than the reſt, to fill our Apprehenſions with Awe and Dignity; they undoubtedly are the two great Luminaries appointed under him to rule the Day and Night. When the Sun goeth forth in his full Strength to run his Courſe, if any thing could lead our Thoughts upwards to a brighter and more glorious Being, that muſt: It is the neareſt Repreſentation, among material things, of the Bounty and Bleſſings of our great Creator; and has hence been ſtiled *the Prince of Heaven, the King and Father, the Leader and the Guide of Nature, the Director of Seaſons and of Times*; it extends its Influence to every Creature, is Light to ſome, and Life to all, dividing its Uſe and Service to all Nations under Heaven; whereby we behold the Beauties of the lower World, and enjoy its Bleſſings with Pleaſure and Comfort.

For theſe Reaſons did vain Men lift up their Eyes, and fix their Affections there: To this King and Queen of Heaven did they bow, pay Divine Worſhip, and religiouſly invocate them for their Protection and Aſſiſtance, as the ſole Authors and Diſpenſers of Good to Mankind. And it is in vain to ſay, that they worſhipped a Supreme Being, in, by, or through theſe, either as Emblems or Mediators. *Plato* expreſly ſays, that the *Greeks* had no other Gods but the Sun, Moon, Stars, *&c.* They neither believed nor imagined any thing to be ſuperior to them; and for ſtarting the leaſt Objection againſt it, *Anaxagoras* was charged with Impiety and Atheiſm, and *Socrates* purſued to Death.

The very *Jews*, amidſt a watchful Providence, awakened by Miracles, and warned by conſtant Teachers from God againſt this very Abomination, frequently fell under the Temptation, and ſerved the Sun, Moon, and Stars, even all the Hoſt of Heaven: And if they proved a Stumbling-Block and a Snare to the choſen People of God, there can be but little Hopes of their proving Guides to direct others to an adequate Knowledge of him.

Wiſd. xiii. 1. And ſo the *Jews* confeſs: *Surely vain are all Men by Nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are ſeen, know him that is; neither by conſidering the Works did they acknowledge the Workmaſter, but deemed either Fire, &c. or the Lights of Heaven, to be the Gods which govern the World.* Whence we learn the Opinion of the *Jews* to be, 1. That the Heathens were ignorant, or knew nothing of the true God. 2. That the Works of Creation never led them to the Creator. 3. That they never could raiſe their Minds, in Contemplation of a Deity, above the Sphere of viſible Things; but concluded them to be truly and eſſentially God, ſince nothing that was not ſo, could govern the World.

Nor did the Heathens ever imagine, that what they knew of the Exiſtence of the Gods was taught them by Nature. *Plato* always aſcribes it to a divine Communication, that it is Θεῶν εἰς ἀνθρώπους δόσις, *the Gift of the Gods to Men.* And in his *Theages*, That they give it to none but ſuch as are their Friends; therefore not indiſcriminately to all who behold the Heavens; and more than once draws an Analogy and Similitude betwixt the Light of the Sun and the Knowledge of God: That as the Eye cannot contemplate the Sun but by its own Light; ſo neither can the Mind contemplate the τὸ ὄν, without ſome Idea or Beam of this chiefeſt Good: Which (he adds) is the Cauſe of all Truth, in every intelligent

Phileb.

Rep. 6. p. 483.

intelligent Faculty, without which there is no Science.

And the Compariſon is juſt; for the Mind knows intellectual things, as the Eye does viſible ones, by the Interpoſition of a proper Agent and due Light: What therefore the Sun is in viſible things, tho' neither the Sight nor Eye; yet the Cauſe of the Eye's ſeeing, the Diſcernment of ſenſible things, and of himſelf being viſible: So is God in Intellectuals, neither the human Mind, nor Reaſon, nor Underſtanding; yet is the immediate ſole Cauſe of all ſpiritual Knowledge to Man; that ineffable Light, which only can open his Mind to contemplate the inviſible Glories of the Divine Nature.

If the Sun could not be perceived but by the Light it affords, much leſs could God (that νοητὸν γνωσεως φῶς, ϗ φῶς ἀληθινὸν, ϗ φῶς τῦ κόσμυ, ϗ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων) to whom the Glory of the heavenly Orbs is no more to be compared than a Glow-worm, or Spark of Fire to them: They enlighten the viſible World, but reach not the internal Mind; they are material, ſubject to Corruption and Vanity, and cannot declare an immaterial incorruptible Nature.

Menander ſpoke well as an Heathen: "That "we ought to worſhip the Sun as the principal God, "becauſe by him we ſee the other Gods." And certainly that God, which is a Sun to the Soul, irradiating the inward Receſſes and Eyes of the Mind, opening to it the Treaſures of Knowledge, ought only to be adored.

Only look at the Sun ſtedfaſtly, and it will dazzle or blind: And if the Natural Eye cannot bear thoſe material Rays, what Hope can there be of its beholding the Emanations of that Glory, *which no Man can ſee and live?* There are but two Images of God propounded to Mortals, by which the Mind is raiſed to inviſible things, and thoſe are *Nature* and *Grace*, the *Works* and *Word of God*. He is ſhewn in them

both, but in both not underſtood; Nature explains, but points not out her Creator; ſhe cannot enlighten the intellectual Eye: The Word and Will of God are the only Light that can open the Eyes of the Blind, and teach them, through the other, a full Acknowledgment of the Truth.

For God is, and muſt be his own Revealer; Matter and Motion only declare his Being, as the Herald does a King by proclaiming his Auguſt Titles. When his Exiſtence and Perfections are manifeſted, they atteſt the Truth of the one, and the exceeding Greatneſs of the other.

Tell Men there is a God, and their Mind embraces it as a neceſſary Truth; unfold his Attributes, and they will ſee the Explanation of them in his Works. When the Foundation is laid ſure and firm, that there is a God, and his Will the Cauſe of all things, nothing made but by his ſpecial Appointment and Command; then the Order of Beings will fill their Minds with a due Senſe of the Divine Majeſty, and they may be made a Scale to raiſe juſter Conceptions of what is Immortal and Inviſible. Every thing around us, or that has any Relation to us, will be Helps to the better Diſcernment of things not ſeen.

Then it will be no light Curioſity, but a moſt improving Lecture to contemplate the excellent Fabrick of the Heavens, the Splendours of the upper Firmament, the Harmony of the Stars, the Glory of the Sun, the Brightneſs of Light, the Viciſſitude of Nights and Days, the monthly Courſes of the Moon, the Seaſons of the Year, the Nature of the Elements, the vegetable Power of Seeds, the infinite Number and Kinds of Animals, preſerving their proper Species; the Magnitude and Grandeur of the Univerſe, its exquiſite Contrivance and Proportions, the Variety of Materials, the admirable Diſpoſition of the Whole, the Regularity of the Deſign, the

Agree-

Agreement and Conſent of every Part conſpiring to one and the ſame End. Theſe, and a thouſand other Obſervations, will give new Light and Strength to prove they muſt be the Work of an Intelligent Mind; and become proper Motives to adore the Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs of that bleſſed Being, who is the Director and Preſerver of them.

In this Senſe, and no other, can Nature be called a School or a Miſtreſs leading to God; and ſo did the wiſeſt Heathens expreſs themſelves. *Zaleucus*, in the Preface to his *Laws*, argues in this manner: "Every Inhabitant ſhould firſt be perſuaded of the "Being and Exiſtence of the Gods; which Belief "he will readily be induced to entertain, when he "contemplates the Heavens, regards the World, "and obſerves the Diſpoſition, Order, and Har-"mony of the Univerſe, *&c.*" Vid. Stobæum, Ser. 42.

This is a juſt and noble Thought of that ancient Lawgiver: He makes the Belief of the Gods the Foundation of Society and Law, what therefore every Member of the Community ſhould be well inſtructed in; and that if in any be found a Spirit of Ignorance or Infidelity, the due Conſideration of the Syſtem of the Univerſe is ſuch a convincing Motive, as muſt ſoon induce them to an Acknowledgment of it.

Cicero has a remarkable Paſſage to this purpoſe, wherein he introduces *Ariſtotle* thus ſtating the Argument: "If we could ſuppoſe ſome Perſons to have "lived in the Bowels of the Earth, with all the "Riches, Magnificence, and Pleaſure, that in our "Opinion make Men happy; yet had never been "on the Surface of the World, but by Hearſay and "Report were informed, that there was an Infinite "Power and Being; and that afterwards, by an "Opening of the Earth, they could come from "thoſe hidden Dwellings into theſe habitable Parts "where we are, and ſhould on a ſudden behold the Nat. D. l. 2. n. 37. in fin.

"Earth, the Sea, and Heavens, ſhould obſerve the "Bigneſs of the Clouds, the Force of Winds, the "Vaſtneſs, Beauty, and Influence of the Sun, that he "cauſed Day by an Expanſion of Light through "the Firmament: And when Darkneſs covered the "Earth, ſhould behold the Heavens enamelled "with Stars, the Variety of Lights in the Moon, "in its Wanes, Increaſe and Full, with the Riſ-"ing and Setting, the fixed and immoveable "Courſes of them all. When they ſaw theſe things, "they could not but acknowledge there was a Deity, "and that theſe mighty Works were the Effects of "his Power."

Undoubtedly true! Firſt acquaint Men that there is a God (which is the very Foundation of the Argument) and then the Works of Nature are a moſt convincing Teſtimony to confirm the Truth both of his Exiſtence and Greatneſs; and in this Senſe they are applied by the wiſeſt of Philoſophers.

The Inferences therefore drawn from the Works of Creation, by the preſent Maintainers of the Law of Nature, are unjuſt; being directly contrary (and that by their own Confeſſion) to what the ancient Heathens made: For they not being able to diſcern the Cauſe ſuperior to all others, the Will of God, never could find out that God created the Univerſe; but vainly attributed it to other Cauſes; to Fate, in which there is no Variety; to the Confuſion of Chance, in which there is no Beauty or Uſefulneſs; to an everlaſting Continuance, which excludes God from the World; to a Concourſe of Atoms, which is full of ungeometrical Abſurdities, in making Matter, ſenſeleſs and unactive Particles, to be Self-exiſtent and Self-moving: Whereas the leaſt Knowledge of Nature might have informed them that Matter cannot act; that Nature, Fate, or Chance, are no real Beings or Agents; that what itſelf has no Subſtance, cannot be truly the Cauſe of

Vid. Dr. Clarke Serm. vol. 1. p. 54.

of any Thing: But if they were not able to find out this firſt Principle, that all things were the Productions of Divine Will and Power, it is abſurd to ſay, that they could through theſe Works diſcover a Deity, being utterly ignorant of the Relation that was betwixt them.

And what was no natural Principle, whereby the wiſe Men of old could come at the Knowledge of God and Duty, cannot be ſo to the reſt of the World: and that they did not look upon this as a Means to attain them, appears from *Socrates*: "That they "who were anxiouſly enquiring into the Laws by "which the heavenly Motions were guided, were "no better than Madmen, in fixing their Minds "on Studies ſo far above human Attainment, and "what no mortal Mind can reach, and neglecting "that which moſt concerned themſelves." He ſurely therefore could not think the Study of Nature, that, which primarily muſt lead the World to Virtue or the Gods. Vid. Euſeb. Præp. l. 15. c. 62.

Finites, though never ſo multiplied, cannot riſe up to the Knowledge of Infinite: And thouſands of *Ariſtotles* or *Newtons* would be as unequal to the Task, as the Herdſman is to the Metaphyſical Depths of the former, or the abſtracted Calculations of the latter; becauſe all human Science is here at an End. And thoſe wretchedly miſtaken and profane Aſſertions the Heathens conſtantly uttered concerning the Divine Nature, may convince us, how inſufficient the Study of Nature with unaſſiſted Reaſon is for theſe Things, and ought to direct us to a better Light than they are able to afford.

And if it be asked, why created Beings cannot manifeſt the uncreated one? It is ſufficient to ſay there is no Proportion between them. We could not from beholding a Glow-worm form any Notion of the Sun; and yet the Creator excels the Creature ten thouſand times more, than the Brightneſs

neſs of the Sun, in its utmoſt Strength, does the dimmeſt Speck of Light: And it is an abſolute Impoſſibility for Reaſon, naked and ignorant of ſuch a Being, by any Propriety, or even Rules of Analogy, to form the leaſt Thought, Idea, Notion, Term, or Definition of his Nature: Whatever we behold, has no Likeneſs or Reſemblance to him. Aſcend as high as we pleaſe, there is an infinite Void between the moſt excellent Effect and the efficient Cauſe; a paſſive created Being, and an active creating Will. It is ſufficient to ſay, that *his* Nature is ſo, and ſo is *ours*; and that to go beyond the Power of our Nature is a Contradiction. There is a Gulph between Finite and Infinite where all Notices ſtop; a Voice in Heaven that does not deſcend, without God utter it; a firſt Cauſe, whoſe Nature no ſecondary one can manifeſt, except he vouchſafe to reveal himſelf.

The *Second* Means, in the Works of Creation, whereby the Teachers of Natural Religion ſay, every Man is able to infer the Neceſſity of a Supreme Being, a Providence, the Soul's Immortality, and all thoſe great Articles which depend upon, and are conſequential to, the Exiſtence of a Deity, is a ſerious Contemplation of his own Frame and Being.

We muſt imagine the firſt Thoughts of Men, employed in conſidering the Objects neareſt to them, and which afford them Suſtenance and Pleaſure; the Variety and Vegetation of Fruits; the Texture, Growth, and Virtues of Plants, Shrubs, and Trees; the Structure, Inſtinct, or Sagacity of Animals; the Diverſity of Organs for Life and Aliment, in their ſeveral Elements; the curious Mechaniſm of every Member, the Eye, the Ear, *&c.* the Glands, Fibres, Muſcles, and every Part beſt adapted to thoſe Actions, wherein the Preſervation of their Being ſeems chiefly to conſiſt: As alſo the various

Appear-

Appearances of Life, Senſe, or Motion, the Qualities and Powers moſt obſervable in them.

But when Man would know the Cauſes of theſe Things, what the Eſſence is which conſtitutes them, what they are; or on what depends their different Properties and Operations, he muſt put an End to his Studies: He viſibly perceives that thus Things are, but why, or how, he can never underſtand. Every Spire of Graſs, every Pebble muſt nonplus this Man of Reaſon; by what Alembick thoſe pure Streams are raiſed that feed and animate the one; or by what Coheſion the Particles of the other are reduced to their Firmneſs and Solidity.

This, one would think, ſhould damp his Hopes of ever comprehending the Subſtances or Operations of nobler Beings, when he cannot find out the Contrivances or Cauſe of the meaneſt Object; and the further he advances, the more ſtrongly muſt he be convinced of the Narrowneſs of his Mind, the Obſcurity of Things, the Impoſſibility of accounting for the Secrets of Nature, which are, and muſt for ever be hid from him.

But as the moſt uſeful Study is to know ourſelves, it is reaſonable to believe every Perſon more deſirous of being acquainted with his own Being, than any other. Here the firſt Obſervations he muſt make, are the Motion of the Heart, the Beating of the Pulſe, the Digeſtion of Nutriment, Motion, Perſpiration, and other involuntary Acts, (though, as they depend not on his Will, they are not cognizable by his Underſtanding) but eſpecially the internal Operations of his Mind, in Thought, Conſciouſneſs, Reflection, *&c.* From theſe Principles it is affirmed, that a Man may naturally know he conſiſts of Soul and Body: For (ſay they) Matter being ſenſeleſs, cannot live alone, nor move itſelf, but muſt receive both Life and Motion from the Soul.

But

But this is begging the Queſtion, and is ſo far from being obvious to unaſſiſted Reaſon; that we may with as much Juſtice affirm it to be impoſſible for the Natural Man to diſcover the ſpecifick Difference of the Parts which conſtitute him.

There can no Reaſon be aſſigned, why he ſhould imagine himſelf a compounded Being, and not rather look upon his whole Frame to be ſo modified and organized, as to occaſion thoſe Thoughts or Motions he obſerves in himſelf, ſince they are inſeparable, never act aſunder, and could ſcarce ever become different Objects of his Contemplation. Or had he raiſed ſome abſtracted Arguments, to prove that Reaſoning, Volition, *&c.* are Operations of a Subſtance inviſible to him, and whoſe Manner of Exiſtence he can no way comprehend; yet one ſound Sleep, when his whole Nature is without any of theſe Acts, will for ever deſtroy the Notion of a pure thinking Subſtance within him; Experience convinces him of the Contrary, that when the Operations of his Body reſt, ſo do thoſe of the Soul. Nay, the Body breathes, and is in Motion, when the other Part is in a State of Death; ſo far from Reaſoning, that it does not think, all its Impreſſions and Ideas are quite obliterated; yet it is waked with the Body, and the Perception being at all times but one Act, and of the whole Man; he could never imagine himſelf compounded of Parts ſo different, and remote from each other; eſpecially ſince with the moſt elevated Speculations, he could not diſcern, or form the leaſt Idea, how a Spirit can modify, act upon, or govern Matter, or how they can be vitally united together.

That this is no unreaſonable Suppoſition, appears from *Cicero*'s Character of the *Britons*, though in that Age the Teachers of Religion to the Weſtern World, "Do but carry among them or the *Scythians*, ſays he, *Poſſidonius*'s Sphere, which ſhews "the

Nat. D. l. 2. n. 34.

" the Revolutions, the Sun, Moon, and Planets " make both Night and Day in the Heavens; and " not one of the Barbarians would doubt, but that " it was a Creature endued with perfect Reaſon." With much greater Reaſon might Man be no more than a well contrived Machine of one and the ſame Materials, in the Opinion of Mankind.

But however, we muſt for Argument's ſake ſuppoſe theſe Perſons, after having accurately ſtudied natural Things, proceed to thoſe which are purely intellectual; raiſe the Mind above the Verge of Senſe and Matter to pure Acts of the Underſtanding, and contemplate the abſtracted Views of corporeal and incorporeal Beings, their Subſtances, eſſential Properties, Accidents, Relations, and Oppoſitions, and whatſoever may be conceived by Abſtraction from Matter; and lay down ſuch ſure Principles and exact Methods that the Centemplator may trace Things to their firſt Origin and Cauſe: That he may not inveſtigate Truth, but know it when he finds it, in being able to aſſign the Reaſons of it, and the Marks whereby he can diſtinguiſh it from Error and Falſhood: For without this, all his Knowledge would be ſuperficial and defective, and his Judgment ever at a loſs, where to doubt, or where to acquieſce. Beſides, all theſe Metaphyſical Speculations are ſo remote from Senſe and Matter, proceed in Paths ſo entirely unfrequented and unknown; the Certainty of the Principles ſo abſtracted and intricate, and every Step full of Diſpute and Doubt, Obſcurity and Perplexity, that if he did not judge this to be an Exerciſe above the Strength of his Mind; yet he muſt go on with Fear and Diffidence, like Travellers in the midſt of Precipices and Danger.

Where then muſt the Inquirer fix his Foot in this new World; by what abſtracted Clue and Method of Reaſoning muſt he ſearch for Demonſtrations to judge of Immateriality; to diſcover the Eſſence,

Eſſence, Operations and Acts of Subſtances ſeparate from Body, and obtain a Diſcernment of aerial ſubtile Spirits and Intelligences? Where he has no Guide but his Senſes, nor can poſſibly believe what is contrary to them; every thing he feels, or hears, or ſees, is a full Conviction to the contrary.

To all which a ſhort Anſwer may ſuffice. The whole is an Impoſſibility. For as an uninſtructed Perſon could have no Inlet or Conveyance of Knowledge, but by Senſation, and nothing is evident to the Senſes but Matter; he never could produce Immateriality out of it: Nothing can be made out of Materials, but what ſuch Materials afford; divide, compare, reflect, abſtract as long as you pleaſe, nothing can be made otherwiſe by Ideas of ſenſible Objects; he may indeed form ſome *Entia Rationis*, Centaurs, or Monſters, by placing different and remote Objects together; but that will never alter the Nature of things, nor any internal Operations or Powers abſtract what is ſpiritual from that which is altogether corporeal.

Can any of our Moderns form a right or poſitive Idea of what is above Body, or of any thing that is not Body? No one can do it whilſt ſo ſtrictly united to the Body. The Dependence on the Senſes, that ſo much confine and obſcure the Light of our Underſtanding, hinders us from it; or if (for Suppoſition's ſake) he could plainly perceive, that the internal Operations of Thought, Reaſoning, and Reflexions are of ſo high and noble a Nature, that they muſt needs proceed from ſomething above all that is body or corporeal, becauſe they infinitely ſurpaſs the Reach and Force of it: Yet he never could pretend to make a true and poſitive Idea of that Principle which is the Cauſe of it. Though, I ſay, he concluded it to be ſomething far more noble than all that is in the rank of

of Bodies, yet could he never determine what its Being or Nature might be.

Or if he endeavoured to penetrate into himſelf, and ſearch into what he is, and what he does; what is this reaſoning Power that is within me? what are theſe Thoughts, theſe Ratiocinations, and thoſe Reflexions I make upon my ſelf and my Operations? Why, or how he thinks; if nothing riſes, or has a beginning of it ſelf, whence things come, or from what Cauſe or Motion they proceed? Before he can any way infer the Neceſſity of the Inſtrument of Thought's being immaterial, he muſt know what the eſſential Attributes of Body and Spirits are, and clearly underſtand what Motion, Action, Life, Self-activity, Cogitation, Intellection, Volition, internal Energy, Penetration, Indiviſibility, and Extenſion mean; as alſo what the Modes and Accidents of a Subſtance are.

He muſt then diſcover the Principle and Root of Life and Cogitation, what is eſſentially Vital and Intellectual, what not; which the true and only Cauſe of Thought, that it cannot proceed from any Compoſition of Matter; Life and Thought not being Accidents, but ſubſtantial things: He muſt diſtinguiſh the Limits between Senſe and Perception, Thinking and Self-conſciouſneſs, Soul, Mind, and Underſtanding, with the Difference of their ſeveral Powers and Operations; he muſt reconcile Immateriality and Subſtantiality together, with numberleſs other abſtract Ideas, before he can have any adequate Conception of the Soul.

Nor after all this, could he fix a Judgment of its Immateriality: If it be ſaid, no Principle can be more evident than this, that no Mechaniſm, Matter, or Motion however modified, can produce Life or Thought; and ſo Thinking is a Proof of the Soul: It will prove indeed that moſt Men are without a Soul the greateſt part of their Lives; but

L. 4. c. 3. §. 6. p. 323. but if we believe Mr. *Locke*, there is no ſuch Evidence in that Propoſition; nor is it any Contradiction to ſuppoſe that the firſt eternal thinking Being, or omnipotent Spirit, ſhould, if he pleaſed, give to certain Syſtems of created ſenſeleſs Matter, put together as he thinks fit, ſome Degrees of Senſe, Perception, and Thought.

Or if we define the Soul to be a thinking Being, that may diſtinguiſh it from other Bodies; but no way proves it void of ſomething like to Matter, nor of Extenſion: nor can they prove the Impoſſibility of Thought and Extenſion to ſubſiſt in the ſame thing; for we cannot conceive how any thing but impulſe of Body, can move Body: How Thought and Will can give a Determination to Matter: If we can, let it be explained, and made intelligible; if we cannot, it will be impoſſible to underſtand how an immaterial Soul can move a dead ſenſeleſs Body; or even to conceive how Matter ſhould at firſt have been created by an immaterial Mind; and without a thorow Conception of it, neither the Soul, nor any Works of Creation could lead us up to God.

Or if the Soul be only Conſciouſneſs and Thought, *cogitandi actus*, then when it ceaſes to think, as in ſound Sleep, it will ceaſe to be; or if it be abſolutely immaterial, and nothing but *actus cogitans*, it could not be affected by material Things, nor could the Objects of Senſe make any Impreſſion on it. When a viſible Thing preſents itſelf to the Eye, or Sounds to the Ear, that could not be the Cauſe that the Soul judges it hears or ſees. And they who maintain the Soul's Immateriality, confeſs themſelves ignorant how to account for it. And if we do not underſtand the Operations of our own finite Mind, let it not ſeem ſtrange that we cannot comprehend the Operations of that eternal infinite Mind, who made and governs all things.

Nor

Nor is this to be wondered at, ſince they who have moſt exerciſed their Thoughts on this Subject, have been forced to acknowledge, that our Faculties cannot arrive at a demonſtrative Certainty about the Immateriality of the Soul. It ſeems to be a Point out of the reach of our Knowledge; and he who will give himſelf the liberty to conſider freely, and look into the dark and intricate part of each Hypotheſis, will ſcarce find his Reaſon able to determine him fixedly, for or againſt the Soul's Immateriality, ſince on which ſide ſoever he views it, either as an unextended Subſtance, or as a thinking extended Matter; the Difficulty to conceive either, whilſt either is alone in his Thoughts, ſtill drives him to the contrary Side: Both Opinions are to us inexplicable, beyond our Comprehenſion. They who will have every thing ſubmit to Reaſon, muſt be *Carteſians* in this Article, whoſe Philoſophy does not advance Thought and Spirit above the Pitch of external Senſe, and goes no higher than the Body, to explain the moſt refined and exalted Operations of the Soul. Vid. Locke Ib. & p. 324.

And if the Immateriality of the Soul be thus difficult to be proved from Nature, much more ſo muſt its Immortality, and ſubſiſting in a ſeparate State, as ſo wholly depending on the former; and whether it can be ſolidly proved from Reaſon, ought to be doubted, ſince hitherto it has not been done: Nor is it poſſible for Nature to teach more, than that though the Body periſhes, there is no actual Neceſſity that the Soul periſh alſo; but no uninſtructed Perſon, from Obſervations on the Death of Animals or of Men, could have the leaſt ground to imagine a ſeparate Subſiſtence of any part of them: He ſees Life extinguiſhed, the whole Man periſh, and all Operations ceaſe; and thence to infer, that ſome part of them ſurvives, lives, and

operates, would be a moſt abſurd and vain Conſequence.

But why ſhould we imagine this of Reaſon unimproved, when the greateſt Maſters of improved Reaſon allow, that when they ſay the Immortality of the human Soul is demonſtrable by natural Reaſon, the Meaning thereof is no more than this, that its Subſtantiality is demonſtrable; from whence it follows, that it will naturally no more periſh, or vaniſh into nothing than the Subſtance of Matter it ſelf; and not that it is impoſſible, either for it, or Matter, by divine Power to be annihilated. Wherefore the Aſſurance we have of our own Souls Immortality, muſt depend upon ſomething elſe beſides their Subſtantiality; namely, a Faith alſo in the Divine Goodneſs, that he will conſerve in being, or not annihilate all ſuch Subſtances created by him; whoſe permanent Subſiſtence is neither inconſiſtent with his own Attributes, nor the Good of the Univerſe; as this of rational Souls unqueſtionably is not, they having both Morality and Liberty of Will, therefore capable of Rewards and Puniſhments, and conſequently fit Objects for the divine Juſtice to diſplay it ſelf upon.

Vid. Cudworth Intellect. Syſt. c. 5. p. 868.

The Argument therefore of Natural Religion ſtands thus: The Operations and Immortality of the Soul are a Means to lead the World to God; but of its Immortality they could have no Aſſurance without Faith in the Divine Goodneſs, which by the very Suppoſition (as this is a Means to bring them to it) they muſt be ignorant of; therefore what they are ignorant of, cannot lead them to God. On the other hand, that which we could have no Aſſurance of without Faith in the Divine Goodneſs, could never lead us to a Knowledge of the Divine Exiſtence and Perfections, becauſe on a Conviction of theſe depends our Aſſurance of the other,

other, and the latter cannot be antecedent to the former.

Whence we may conclude that Man of himſelf could never have known the immaterial, ſpiritual, impaſſible Nature of the Soul; but that like other dvine Truths, whenever it is diſcovered, it appears in the higheſt manner agreeable to the Expectations and Wiſhes of a rational Creature, and diſpoſes him to more exalted Acts of Gratitude and Adoration towards the incorporeal Maker of his Being.

Another Contemplation, that would elude the ſublimeſt Efforts of the Man of Reaſon in a State of Nature, is, that though he had diſcovered a ſeparate Being within himſelf from the Body; yet he never could find out any ſpecifick Difference between his own Soul, and that of other Animals, and muſt therefore conclude both or neither to be Immortal. As it would be of no moral Service to him to know he has a Soul, which neither in Original nor Excellency is above the Beaſts that periſh; and as he ſees both alike rot after Death, it is moſt reaſonable to imagine his Concluſion would be, that Death puts an end to both their Beings.

Nor muſt we rank the Knowledge of this Difference in Souls among natural and common Truths; for if Brutes have not Reaſon, they have ſomething ſo like it, and make approaches ſo near to it, that no Philoſophy has been able to fix the Boundaries between Souls, any further than by mere Gueſs and Opinion. What conſtitutes the Souls of Beaſts? what Degrees of Reaſon they are capable of? whether they are only Automata, organized Machines, Modifications of Matter, or ſpiritual Subſtances? Theſe are Queſtions which have exerciſed the Schools and Wits of every Age, yet lie as far as ever from being decided.

It falls under the Obſervation of every one, that the Souls of Beaſts have Senſe, therefore muſt be nobler than the Body; that among the Objects of all their Senſes they judge ſome agreeable, others prejudicial, therefore deſire one, and avoid the other; that they remember what is paſt, as Correction or Encouragement, reflect thereon, and draw ſome kind of Conſequences to direct their future Actions. And how can Reflexion be without Thought, or Thought without Knowledge, or Knowledge without Reaſon, or Reaſon without Immateriality? Theſe Paſſions and Acts proceed from the Soul, whoſe Deſires are the Cauſe of them; and yet Matter, however ſubtile or refined, is incapable of Thought or Reflexion: Hence Experience and Example confound and render the thing inexplicable.

Let it be ſhewn, wherein the Difference of them conſiſts; if it be that they reaſon leſs perfectly than Men, ſo do Children and Lunaticks: Or if this proceeds from the Fault of the Organs, ſo it may in them. It is evident that they are not mere Machines, nor can material Principles effect what we every Day obſerve in them; it is impoſſible to deny them ſome Degrees of Thought or Reaſon, and admitting the leaſt Degree, we know not where to ſtop, why that which is capable of ſome Reaſon ſhould not be of more, or how to aſſign the true Occaſion of it; and hence none agree in the Meaſures of their Senſe or Reaſon, or in the Nature and Operations of their Soul.

Moſt of the Ancients thought that Beaſts were rational. *Cicero* ſays, "That in a Piſmire there is "Reaſon, Mind, and Memory." They alſo believed their Souls to be part of the Soul of the World, as *Virgil* calls that of Bees. *Partem Divinæ mentis*, and to return to it after Death,

Nat. D. l. 3. n. 9.

——*viva*

——————*viva volare*
Sideris in numerum, atque alto ſuccedere cælo.

That their Reaſon was the ſame, and in common with Men, ſome enjoying it in a greater, others in a leſs Degree: And all the Philoſophers who believed Tranſmigration, were obliged to acknowledge the Souls of Beaſts and Men to be the very ſame; as others not knowing where to ſtop, attributed to them ſocial Virtues, the Knowledge of Religion and of God. *Philo* wrote a Book on this Subject, that Brute Animals are endued with Reaſon. Euſeb. Hiſt. Ecl. l. 2. c. 18.

Salmaſius, *Locke* and others cannot but allow that Beaſts have Reaſon; and Mr. *Locke* would make the Diſtinction between theirs and Mens, to conſiſt in this, that Brutes have only particular but no abſtracted general Ideas: And ſome in the fury of Philoſophy, not finding a Solution for theſe things in the general Laws of Motion, obſerving little Difference betwixt the Diſguiſe of Reaſon in an Ape, or a Clown, have pronounced the Souls of Beaſts by Nature immortal as the Souls of Men; for if they are not material, why ſhould they be mortal? if they do not ſubſiſt after Death, it is not owing to any Imperfection in them, but to the Will of him that created them.

Nay many learned and pious Men have aſſerted their Immateriality and Subſiſtence after Death. The great Dr. *Henry More* believed they ſubſiſted out of the Body, and thinks it probable enough that they continue to live in that State, but dares not affirm it; only alledging what may be ſaid on both ſides the Queſtion.

On the other hand, the *Carteſians* make Beaſts perfect Automata, hold it a kind of Impiety to allow their Souls capable of any Knowledge, as what would at once deſtroy all the natural Proofs we

have of our own Souls Immortality. And the Maintainers of Natural Religion think it a dangerous Opinion, becauſe we could not then be aſſured of it but by Revelation; which, though the Truth, rather than allow, they will perplex themſelves with inextricable Difficulties.

The only Inference I ſhall draw, is this: That if there be ſo much Difficulty to diſtinguiſh between Spiritual and Corporeal Beings, to find out the Nature of a Rational Soul, with thoſe Properties which diſtinguiſh it from others, and that the moſt improved Reaſon has but ſuch an imperfect View of theſe things; it would be a vain Attempt for a Natural Man to compaſs the Knowledge of what his Soul was; and much more ſo, from any Notices he could attain, to riſe higher in the Scale of Spiritual Beings, to the puiſſant Hoſt of Heaven, and from them to the Father of Spirits and Men, the All-glorious and Inviſible God.

But I muſt add, that if the Philoſophers did not diſcover theſe Truths, they cannot be Parts of Natural Religion: Yet *Parmenides*, *Empedocles*, *Democritus*, *Anaxagoras*, and others, taught the Souls of Beaſts to be rational; *Strato* and *Æneſidemus*, that Senſe could not ſubſiſt without Underſtanding; *Sextus Empiricus*, that no Animal is void of Reaſon, but that all are capable of Knowledge and Underſtanding. *Pliny* makes Religion one of the Moral Virtues of Elephants; and *Xenocrates* affirmed, that Beaſts have a Religion, and know God; and the *Platoniſts* (according to *Dion*, *L.* 39.) ſeem to have held the Souls of Brutes to be immortal.

L. 8. c. 1. Init.

And with regard to the Soul of Man in particular, there never was a Philoſopher in the World who thought it void of a Body; the moſt and the wiſeſt of them thought it Elementary and Corporeal; and *Galen*, that admirable Phyſician, that it was only a Temperament of the Body; though at other

L. 3. de locis affectis, c. 6.

other times he confeſſes his Ignorance of it, and that he had not ſufficiently diſcovered its Nature. *Ariſtippus* ſaid, we are all Body; and *Zeno*, all Mind. And the greateſt of them, who had been taught they had a Soul, and that it was immortal, never could diſcover any certain Truth concerning its Nature or Operations; but univerſally fell into two Extremes, both of them wicked and abſurd: The one exalted Man into the Place of God, by making his Soul a Part of the Divinity; which is ſtill maintained by the *Cabaliſts* of *Perſia*, and the *Brachmans* of *India*. Others degraded him to the Beaſts, by holding there was nothing in the Univerſe or Man, but Atoms, Matter, and local Motion: So that all the Operations of the Mind muſt be the Effects of dead inſenſible Body, without Judgment, without Reaſon; or, what little mends the Hypotheſis, of ſome ſubtile Matter, Fire, Wind, or Air, the Particles of which, however fine or ſmall, or nimble in their Texture or Diſpoſition, will ſtill be Body; and Thought, Invention, Meditation, *&c.* be only the Reſult and Motion of an artificial Engine.

L. 7. de uſu partium. Cic. Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 45.

But the firſt Stumbling-Block to the ancient Philoſophers, and what no one could get over, was, to conceive an Incorporeity, any thing entirely void of Matter; without a proper Notion of which, all further Proof, or even Thoughts about the Soul, muſt be at an end, or altogether vain and imaginary.

The perpetual Difficulties that occurred on theſe Subjects, made ſome, as *Democritus*, deny there were any Spiritual Beings; and *Ariſtotle*, any more than thoſe which moved the Heavenly Bodies, without which he could not account for their Motion. And *Boethus* had reaſon to obſerve, that whoever went about to prove the Immortality of the Soul, from the bare Conſideration of its Nature, would ſtand in

Euſeb. Præp. l. 11. c. 28. p. 555.

need of many, and thoſe very intricate Arguments.

If then the State of Philoſophy was ſo blind and uncertain as to this moſt eſſential and important Article, what total Ignorance muſt the Bulk of Mankind be under concerning it, or entertain the loweſt and moſt unworthy Conceptions of it? Such as *Plutarch* mentions to have been a prevailing Cuſtom, never to put out the Snuff of a Lamp, but let it die of itſelf; becauſe they looked upon it to be a living Creature, from its Motion, Want of Nouriſhment, and the Grone it gives when quenched; to kill it therefore was a kind of Cruelty and Murder. Such pitiful Notions would Men, in a State of Nature, have of this Divine Principle the Soul.

In Quæſtionibus.

But beſides the general Contemplation of the Works of God, in their Grandeur and Magnificence; or the particular Frame of Man, the exquiſite Contrivance of his Body, the Intellectual Faculties and Powers of his Soul;

There is, *3dly*, Another natural Means, whereby, it is ſaid, every Man may diſcover the Neceſſity of a Divine Exiſtence, with all thoſe great Truths that compoſe Morality, or the Religion of Nature.

And that is from the Order, Fitneſs, and Relation of Things.

Great indeed is the Syſtem of the Univerſe, and adorable that Wiſdom that could form ſuch infinite Diverſity of Beings, all acting regularly by the Laws of their Nature to the End for which they were appointed: Such their Contrivance, Fitneſs and Order, ſuch their ſteady Proportions, mutual Relations, and neceſſary Dependencies; that notwithſtanding the boundleſs Variety of Parts and Members, they all act in Harmony together, and by the fitteſt Means conſpire to their reſpective Ends, without Defect, without Error or Confuſion.

Yet

Yet it is not the beholding theſe things, a ſlight Knowledge or Contemplation of them, that will direct us to their firſt immaterial Cauſe; for then no one could be ignorant of him: It muſt therefore ſuppoſe a cloſe Attention, a deep Penetration, a thorow Inſight of the Fitneſs between Cauſes and Effects, their Relations and Dependencies, that muſt ſhew us the Univerſal Efficient God. And if this be the Task impoſed upon Man, if he is ſent into the World under Obligations to know his Duty and his God, and doomed to find them out in the Secrets of Nature; we need not ſtick to pronounce him the moſt miſerable of Creatures, fitted for Deſtruction by the very Law of his Being.

For is not the thing utterly impoſſible? Who ever did it? Where, or in what Age did they live? Or what were the Mediums in this Procedure? If there be any Memorials, let them be produced: If there be nothing of this, the whole Argument muſt be a chimerical Non-entity, and placed among the many other vulgar Errors. And that it is ſo, we need no other Conviction, than to conſider how miſerably ſhallow our Underſtandings are, how little we know of ourſelves, or the things about us: That when we contemplate the vaſt Circuits of Divine Wiſdom, and think how much the Deſigns and Actions of Omniſcience and Eternity are beyond ours, it muſt make an Undertaking of this nature ſeem deſperate, and diſcourage even Confidence itſelf from attempting it.

Or allowing that there is a Golden Intellectual Chain hanging from Heaven to Earth, a Clue to guide us through the dark Maze of Viſible and Inviſible: How many Ages muſt be ſpent? how many Syſtems of Phyſicks invented, before Man could make the leaſt Approaches to it? Though he is acquainted with nothing but Matter, yet he muſt know that Matter is incapable of Knowledge and Contrivance; that

that it never acts, but is always acted on; determined by certain Laws, which it neceſſarily and involuntarily obeys, therefore never could be a Free Agent, to produce itſelf, or any thing beſides. He muſt find out the Laws by which it is acted on; the ſeveral Powers of Nature; the Diſpoſitions, Qualities, and Operations of every compound Being, and what conſtitutes a thing in its eſſential Perfections; and then at one extenſive View behold their mutual Dependence, and the Relations they bear to each other; diſcern the Cauſe of every Effect, ſee where the Connexion lies, and how the Scale of Beings neceſſarily aſcends, from the Pebble that lies on the Strand, to the glorious Spirits round the Throne above: For if there be not Evidence in every Step, the Conviction ceaſes; if but one Link is not faſtned, by Truth and Nature, to the next above it, the whole Procedure is at an end. For in the Series of Cauſes, every thing (except the Firſt Cauſe) being produced by ſomething above itſelf, if there be one Breach in this Chain of Cauſality, we muſt neceſſarily ſtop, there is no Poſſibility of aſcending higher.

Now which of the Ancients was this Exhauſter of Nature, could explain its Phænomena, or tell how things are brought to paſs? Without which all Inveſtigation of a Deity, from the Fitneſs of things, would be very ſuperficial; and the Magnifiers of Reaſon need only apply their Enquiries to the Nature of the leaſt Fly, or Blade of Graſs, to perceive there is more Myſtery in theſe than Natural Philoſophy ſhall ever unfold; only let them tell us why Graſs is green, and their Abilities ſhall never be queſtioned.

But alas! they are forced to own the long Chain of Cauſes, whereon the leaſt Effect depends, is hid from our Knowledge; that we ſee the outward Form and Workings, but the inward moving Principle we diſcern not the leaſt of. The Operation of every indivi-

individual ſingle Eſſence puzzles the moſt ſharp-ſighted Reaſon, and has more in it than Royal Societies can diſcover. And if we ſo palpably miſtake or misjudge in almoſt every Particular, how can we comprehend the whole? the Methods of divine conducting and ordering the great Frame of Beings? what are their Principles or Limits? their active or paſſive Powers? what the Wiſdom and Diſpoſition of Means, and that Energy wherein conſiſts the immutable Connexion and Series that ſo finally determines things to their End; and by which all Secondary Cauſes regularly work under the Univerſal One.

Principles may be laid down in ſome Sciences as converſant about the Works of Men: But Nature is the Work of God, wherein we can lay down few or no ſure Principles, not being able to penetrate its Deſign and Wiſdom. The moſt contemptible of Natural Appearances has Qualities and Powers unknown to us, what no Study or Application can perceive or explicate. What Extravagance muſt it be therefore, to lay down any Principles as ſure and certain, whereby the whole Machine operates, and Nature performs her myſterious hidden Works?

Is there not at preſent a great Variety of Schemes and Opinions, and are there not new Syſtems of Phyſicks every Day growing up in the Purſuit and Chace of Nature? How little then is there of that maſterly Knowledge, which pronounces of Things according to their real Degrees of Certitude, and can fix the Bounds between Probability and Truth? The Enquiries of one Age have ever criticiſed and refined upon the preceding ones. And though perhaps there have been greater Improvements in experimental Knowledge in the laſt Century, than in the thouſands of Years that went before it; yet Nature has ſtill her Veil on, is better gueſſed at, but not known: For what Part of any Syſtem is more

more than Conjecture, carries Demonſtration with it, ſcientifically declares by what Laws ſhe acts, and explains the Reaſons of all this exact Order, Fitneſs, and Congruity? Or if ſhe did at laſt unboſom herſelf to a *Newton*, Was ſhe not a niggardly Stepmother to the reſt of her Sons, through a Succeſſion of ſo many Ages? And who will ſay that he ſhall not be dethroned by the next Generation?

The many Errors in the Works of the greateſt among the Ancients, may convince us what an obſtinate Study the Search into Nature is: And if they were ſo miſled as to juſtify the moſt extravagant Abſurdities, what Advances could unaſſiſted Reaſon make in theſe dark and gloomy Subjects? the Deeper its Penetration was, the fuller would its Conviction be, of wanting a Capacity to know any thing beyond its outward Surface, and acquieſce with an Obſervation long ago made, *Neque ea inveſtigare curamus, quæ non poſſe comprehendi liquidiſſimum eſt.* It would be Modeſty and Wiſdom to decline the Search of what is paſt Diſcovery, by vainly trying to ſound thoſe Depths we know to be unfathomable. It is Arrogance to ſay a Man can do it, and when convinced that he cannot, it is Folly to attempt it.

Arnob. l. 2.

What did *Ariſtotle*, that Prodigy in Nature, know of her Fitneſs and Relations, when he makes the heavenly Bodies nobler and diviner than Men, in Underſtanding, Soul and Body, becauſe they are nearer to, and partake of greater Virtue from the Gods; like chief Magiſtrates or Princes, who by their own Will rule and direct all Things? And *Cicero*'s vaſt Wiſdom terminated in this; "That "if we can gueſs right at any Truth, we can have "no Doubt to believe that this World is a living "Animal endued with Underſtanding, *&c.*" How many Errors are here crowded in a few Words, that

Ethic. l. 6. & in De mundo.

Timæus, p. 594.

that muſt neceſſarily lead a Man from God and Truth?

And the little Progreſs made by thoſe Ancients, who ſtudied this Subject with the greateſt Approbation, is a ſufficient Proof, how inviſible the Powers, and remote from Obſervation the Deſigns of Nature are: They were not able to fix one Rule, or ſettle one Principle in her Actings; but every one advanced his own Conjecture, another contradicted and rejected it, and laid down other Maxims, more defective perhaps, than his Adverſaries; which ſtill prepared new Matter for Diſpute, in which they loſt themſelves; and ſome from their not being able to find any Evidence or Certainty in Nature, firſt doubted, and then denied the Exiſtence of a Divinity.

So that if the Study of Nature was to lead us to Theology, yet conſidering her profound Darkneſs, the Delight ſhe has to conceal herſelf, and the Cloſeneſs with which ſhe muſt be followed, the numberleſs Appearances to be examined, Obſervations to be made, Experiments to be repeated, before any probable Axioms could be eſtabliſhed; it muſt convince us, that the Learning of no ſingle Perſon, nor of Ages, could be ſufficient for it. It was the Work of a thouſand Years, to find out the Meaſure of one Year; by which Proportion, the Labour of ten thouſand would never have taught them the Will of God.

Nay ſo far were theſe Contemplations from having any ſuch Tendency, that they at firſt lead the World from God; the infinite Variety of Parts, the Subordination and Dependence of Cauſes, the exact Symmetry, Order, and Motion, the admirable Harmony and Relation between the Elementary, Vegetable, Animal, and Rational Productions, the Fitneſs and Congruity between Generals and Individuals in all their different Species, perſuaded them,

them that the Univerſe was a perfect ever bleſſed Being, the firſt Cauſe and Origin, and introduced that moſt early Idolatry of Coſmolatry, the adoring the τὸ πᾶν, *the Univerſe*, or whole Syſtem of Things.

Was it not long after Diſputes prevailed every where in *Greece*, in the Markets as well as Schools, about phyſical Things, the Motion of Matter, Formation of the World, *&c.* that they introduced a νῦς Mind, or intelligent Being, to be not the Creator, but the Orderer of Matter; and attributed to the Elements thoſe Works, which nothing but a Divine Nature could produce? Or to what Purpoſe did *Ariſtotle* ſtudy Nature with ſuch indefatigable Accuracy, but to believe the World was eternal, had no Original, no Cauſe from which it proceeded? which at once deſtroys the Poſſibility of the Creation, and the very Exiſtence of a God.

Plato indeed was very fond of recommending human Sciences for the better Attainment of Divine Knowledge; though it be inconſiſtent with his frequent Aſſertions, that the Knowledge of the Gods is a Gift of the Gods, *&c.* Yet his Maſter *Socrates* went a ſhorter way to work; he always conſulted the Oracle to know the Will of the Gods: And (as *Xenophon* relates it) never would adviſe a Study of Geometry, Aſtronomy, or other Sciences, further than they were uſeful for the neceſſary Actions of Life; but not to amuſe themſelves with the vain Curioſities of Arithmetick, nor puzzle a Man's Brains with he knew not what Figures, Niceties, and Inventions of little or no Uſe, but what diſtracted the Mind from other more neceſſary Studies: So neither would he allow of a too curious Enquiry into the wonderful Workmanſhip of the Gods in the Diſpoſition of the Univerſe; that being a Secret, which the Mind cannot comprehend; and becauſe it is not an Action acceptable to the Gods, to endea-

Mem. Soc. l. 4.

endeavour at diſcovering what they would hide from us, and held it dangerous to perplex the Mind with thoſe ſublime Speculations, as *Anaxagoras* had done, *&c.* Whence it appears that this firſt and greateſt Heathen Moraliſt, did not come at any religious Truths by the Fitneſs of Things, but looked on all ſuch Attempts, not only as vain and idle, but unlawful.

Cicero likewiſe thought all theſe Things ſurrounded with ſo thick a Darkneſs, that no human Underſtanding can penetrate into Heaven, or dive into the Earth: We are not acquainted with our own Bodies, and can we lay open and diſcloſe the Nature of Things, tell whether the Earth be fixed on its own Roots and Axis, or hangs penſile in the Air? whether there be Antipodes, *&c.* That *Socrates* and *Ariſton* thought no ſuch Things could be known: And the ſtrange Diſſent in Opinion among all the Philoſophers fully proved that Truth was not among them; that the utmoſt was Probability, and much was ſaid on both Sides the Queſtion; even of the Mind, whether it were corporeal, mortal, or eternal; and *Cicero* could never account, if the World was made for the Uſe of Man, why the Gods made Serpents and Vipers, and diſperſed ſo many noxious things through the Elements. Vid. Acad. Q. l. 4. n. 39. Lactant. p. 608.

So *Balbus* in *Cicero* confeſſed, that nothing was more difficult than to abſtract our Minds from the Obſervation of this viſible World, when we endeavour to apprehend the Nature of the Gods; and they who would leave the Diſcovery of a Deity to Collections and Inferences made from the Order of the Univerſe, would ſoon baniſh him, as well as his Revelation, out of the World: For our Minds ſtrangely adhere to ſenſible things; nor is there any Tranſition from modified Matter to Incorporeity, from any Knowledge we can attain of the Myſteries or Operations of Nature, to the Wiſdom, Counſel or Deſigns Nat. D. l. 2.

Deſigns of the Maker of all things; as *Job* at large ſets forth, *chap.* xxxviii, *&c.* The utmoſt Stretch of Philoſophy leaves Man where it found him, grovelling upon Earth, where Millions of Wonders ſtill lie unobſerved and unknown, upon the Superficies of things.

If then our utmoſt Knowledge be ſo ſlender and imperfect, and the Nature of things ſo impenetrable, how is it poſſible to conceive the benign Author of our Beings ſhould leave us to penetrate thoſe thick Clouds by which he is hid from us? *For verily* (ſays *Iſaiah*, lxv. 15.) *Thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf.* And *Job*, *chap.* xxviii. ſhews that there is a Knowledge of Natural things, but puts a quick Period to human Wiſdom: *Men may dig Gold out of the Bowels of the Earth, and the thing that is hid bring forth to Light: But where ſhall Wiſdom be found, or where is the Place of Underſtanding? The Depth ſaith, It is not in me, and the Sea ſaith, It is not in me.* All our Searches into created Beings, to know the Method and Order of God's Deſigns, are but in vain, and loſt Labour. *Man knoweth not the Price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the Living.* A Work too great for the wiſeſt of Men to attain. *Whence then cometh Wiſdom, and where is the Place of Underſtanding?* by what Study ſhall they attain it, or in what Place come to the Knowledge of it? *God*, and he alone, *underſtandeth the Way thereof, and he knoweth the Place thereof.* And that this is confined to Natural things, and not his Providential Dealings with Men, appears from the following Paſſage: *That he maketh the Weight for the Winds, and weigheth the Waters by Meaſure; that he made a Decree for the Rain, and a Way for the Lightning of the Thunder*; all which things are above human Reaſon. *God only ſees, and declares, prepares, and ſearches them out. And unto Man he ſaid, Behold the Fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom, and to depart from Evil is Under-*

Underſtanding. Not to enquire into the ſecret Cauſes of the Works of God, but attend to his Revealed Will, *to do good and to eſchew evil*, which is all the practical Wiſdom God requires.

And this Argument will terminate where the other did: Declare the Exiſtence and Nature of God, and then this Fitneſs, Reaſon, and Relations of things, will amply declare the Wiſdom of the Almighty Artificer. Then the more we obſerve, and the better we underſtand the Series and Dependence of things, the greater Neceſſity ſhall we perceive to adore and obey their Infinite Author. But to make this a Book for unaſſiſted Reaſoners to learn their Duty and their God from, is a Leſſon not to be learned in the Land of the Living: A Task that neither *Job*, nor *Hipparchus*, nor *Newton*, could have done. And a learned Author, on theſe grounds, concludes with great juſtice, "That he could not but plainly ſee, "that if God had not been pleaſed to have revealed "himſelf to Men in the firſt Ages, many thouſands "of Years would have paſſed, before Men could "have acquired by Reaſon ſuch a Knowledge of the "Works of God, as to have obtained any juſt Sen-"timents of his Being or Worſhip." Shuckford.

Another Corollary evidently deducible, is, That if Men, with the moſt ſagacious Faculties and unwearied Application, could not attain any competent Knowledge of the Eſſence or Nature of things, their Principles, Operations, or Powers, their Reaſon, Fitneſs, Dependence, and Relation in the general Syſtem; which the wiſeſt Men, and the ableſt Defenders of Natural Religion, over and over confeſs: It muſt follow, that they cannot infer from them any Rule or Law of Acting, or ſuch Obligations as can require and enforce Obedience; becauſe from what is unknown, nothing real, certain, or obligatory, can be deduced; for what the Mind does not know, it cannot believe or obey.

Yet this, in the preſent Age, is the great Article, the very Foundation of all Religion, and intended to baniſh Revelation out of the World: For if Reaſon and the Nature of things plainly point out unto us whatever God requires, or what can tend to the Good of his Creatures; all poſitive and revealed Laws may be deemed not only ſuperfluous but ſuperſtitious, ſince the Mind of Man and the Book of Nature are ſufficient to theſe Purpoſes.

But both Parts of this precarious Aſſumption are falſe: *Firſt*, No Man ever did, or can attain a Knowledge of the Powers, Relations, or Dependencies of things. Or, *Secondly*, If they could, ſuch Fitneſſes would be only Natural and Phyſical, and could not have in them any Moral Obligation; for that cannot be founded in the Relation of things, but only in the Will of God; and it is the Conſciouſneſs of a thing's being his Command, that makes it obligatory on the Will of Man; and the free Compliance or Non-compliance with this Conſciouſneſs, makes the eſſential moral Difference in human Actions.

This Doctrine is thus ſtated: "The Law ariſes
Bp. Wilkins. "from things themſelves, which appearing by the
"Light of Nature to be neceſſary to our well-do-
"ing, is called the *Law of Nature*; and thence re-
"ſults the Obligation to the Obſervance of ſuch
"things, without the Command of any Superior,
"who is able to enforce it. For there are ſuch
Dr. Clarke Dif. 2. p. 36. "eternal and neceſſary Differences of things, that
"the Will of God does always and neceſſarily de-
"termine itſelf to act according to the eternal Rea-
"ſon of things; and from this Difference naturally
"and neceſſarily ariſe moral Obligations, which be-
"ing the Law of Right Reaſon founded on the
"Nature of things, is the Law of Nature, Eter-
"nal, Univerſal, and Unchangeable. And theſe
"moral Obligations being of eternal Neceſſity in
"their

" their own Nature, are in ſome reſpect antecedent
" even to the Conſideration of their being the Will
" and Command of God himſelf; for Matters of
" Natural Reaſon and Morality, are not holy or
" good becauſe commanded, but commanded of
" God becauſe they are holy and good. Whence Fiddes, Vol. 2d, p. 34.
" it follows, That antecedently to any poſitive Law
" or Declaration of God's Will, Man had a Rule
" given him, whereby he was to conduct him-
" ſelf."

All which muſt be void of Foundation, if there be no Obligation in Law, but what ariſes from the Will of a rightful Superior, which we have ſeen to be the Opinion of learned Men in all Ages, till Philoſophy tainted Chriſtianity. Or, *Secondly*, If, according to St. *Paul*, *It is by Faith*, a relying on divine Teſtimony, and not our own Reaſon or Sagacity, *we underſtand the Worlds were framed by the Word of God.* For then the Works of Creation, or the Nature and Fitneſs of things, could never acquaint us with the firſt and greateſt Relation wherein we ſtand, and on which all others depend, that of Creature and Creator.

It is ſaid, that the Will of God always and neceſſarily determines itſelf to act according to the eternal Reaſon of things. But of what things, when none exiſted? Or what was the Reaſon of things, but that Nature and Order which he gave them? There could be no Motive to Creation, but free unbounded Will. The Almighty was under no Neceſſity to create things when he did, or at all; nor to have placed them in the Series, Rank and Order we now behold them, and on which their preſent Relations depend. But whenever he determined, he was as free as to the Manner of Acting, as he had been from all Eternity, as to Time; Infinite Wiſdom could undoubtedly contrive, and Infinite Power execute whatever he willed; ſo Infinite Goodneſs would

furniſh all its Works with Faculties ſuitable to the Purpoſes of their reſpective Natures, to anſwer the End for which they were created.

And when he ſurveyed the Material and Intellectual World, *he ſaw that it was good*, i. e. agreeable to his Will, in which the higheſt Perfection of Created things muſt conſiſt. There was no Eternal Reaſon, but of and in God. All things received ſuch Eſſence, Virtues, Perfections, and Limits, as it pleaſed his Will, not neceſſarily, but freely to deal out to them, and no other. His Will was the Meaſure of all things, in appointing their Natures, and ſuch Bounds as they cannot exceed: And the univerſal Cauſe, when, why, and how things are, is only the executive Power of the Divine Will; for his Willing it, is Omnipotence in the Effect; becauſe God can do what he will; and to will a thing, is to cauſe it, as the executive Power is inſeparable from it. Nor is there any Eternal Goodneſs, but that of God; all Created Goodneſs is purely relative to that, and could have no Exiſtence before the Creatures: Evil is a Violation of that Rule, or Non-conformity to the Will of God; and conſequently not only poſterior to Eternal, but even to Created Goodneſs.

And if Exiſtence be owing to the Will of God, ſo muſt the Manner of Exiſtence, that Reaſon, Fitneſs, Connexion, and Relations, they ſtand in, which is only another Method of expreſſing their Eſſence or Nature, which is from God, and not of themſelves: For the Order of any Being is no more than the Condition it is placed in, or aſſigned to it, in the Syſtem of things, which abſolutely depended on the Divine Will; or there muſt be ſomething external to it, to determine or direct its Operations, which cannot be ſaid of God. But as that never acts in vain, it accordingly directed every Creature in Heaven and Earth, animate and inanimate, to this End; to act in ſuch a manner as is fit and proper for them

in

in their reſpective Stations, that is, according to their Nature. And ſo *Plato* underſtood it: Νοῦς ἐστιν ὁ διακοσμῶν τε καὶ πάντων αἴτιος; *It is the Mind* (*viz.* the divine Mnid) *which diſpoſeth in due Order, and is the Cauſe of all things.* Phædo, P. 97.

And the Order they are placed in, is the Law of their Being, *i. e.* to act regularly, according to the Rank that they are conſtituted in the general Syſtem; ſo τάξις (from τάττω) ſignifies Law as well as Order, and νόμος (from νέμειν, *to diſtribute orderly*) Order as well as Law; and to preſerve this Obedience in Beauty, Perfection, and Order, is the End of all Beings, *viz.* the Glory of him who placed them where they are, and for whoſe ſake (not their own) *they are and were created.* Such Creation conſtituted the Natural Reaſon of things; every thing is what it is, with its ſeveral Properties and Relations, as being what the Will of God made it, not from Nature or any Energy of its own; and there can be no other Eternal Reaſon of things, than their being what he created them.

And were there no other created Being, which at preſent ſubſiſts, but Man; he might have a Law and Order of Being, and have been required to act in a manner fitting, proper, and congruous to his Nature, without any other Relation but to God; and therefore the Relations of things no way infer any Eternal Neceſſity or Moral Obligation on him, in their own Nature: For Relations cannot be eternal, except the things themſelves were ſo, a Relation without a relative Subject being impoſſible; nor can they be (as affirmed) eternal in their Nature; for they have no Exiſtence or Nature, but temporary, by being created and placed in a certain Order, which was the Will and Pleaſure of the Firſt Cauſe, on whom the ſeveral Modes of Being, or not Being, abſolutely depend, as the Meaſure of all; and without whom nothing elſe could be, nothing could be poſſible or

impoſſible, neceſſary or contingent, true or falſe, affirmed or denied.

For Relation, or the Reſpects of things of themſelves, is nothing but that Mode of Exiſting, and Habit of Influence and Dependence, the Effect ſtands in with regard to its Cauſe, on which it wholly depends: And if Eſſence in Being or Acting were of eternal Neceſſity in its own Nature, and not dependent on, and ſubordinate to the Creative Cauſe or Divine Will; then it muſt be independent, if not wholly, in ſome part of its Eſſence or Operations, and conſequently ſo far not a Creature. For is it poſſible for God to make a Creature independent, and not ſubordinate in Eſſence and Operation to him? It is a manifeſt Contradiction, to be and not to be; for what does not depend upon God in all its Operations, is not a Creature. It is of the Eſſence of a Creature to be dependent, and ſo far as it is independent, it muſt give itſelf Being; but infinite and abſolute Cauſality being eſſential to God, it is incommunicable to a Creature, either in giving or Continuance of Being.

Therefore Obligation, Fitneſs, or Relation, can be no older than the Syſtem of things themſelves; and as this is not eternal, ſo neither can be the other, but only a Conſequence of their Exiſtence. Now the Will of God muſt be the Meaſure of his Power in giving Exiſtence to ſuch a Syſtem; therefore its Nature, Reaſon, and Fitneſs, muſt depend upon that Will which determined things to be what they are. And as infinite Goodneſs is inſeparable from infinite Power, whatever it eſtabliſhes muſt be holy, juſt and good, becauſe Eternal Holineſs and Juſtice cannot act or determine otherwiſe.

And they who will fix the Congruity of things, by the Laws of their own vain and ſtoical Imaginations, meaſuring the Divine Perfections by their own Reaſon and Rules, are only putting themſelves

in

in his Throne, to be as wiſe as God. It is the greateſt Arrogance not to allow God his ſecret Reaſons, which our Reaſon cannot fathom: Becauſe no Created Being can conceive or explain the ſeveral χίσεις, Modes, Order, Degrees, and Reſpects of Dependence and Subordination, in Entity, Exiſtence, or Operation, any one ſingle Effect ſtands in to the Firſt Cauſe. Dependence we know, but not the Series, Order, Degree, or Limits, between the various Creatures and the Omnipotent Cauſality and Influence of the Creator, in which the Relation conſiſts; nor the Reaſons of Infinite Wiſdom, which determined the various Degrees of Divine Emanation, Concourſe, and Influence. Nay, thoſe very things that ſeem irregular and deformed, confuſed and monſtrous, are the Iſſue of Infinite Wiſdom and Reaſon, beautiful in their Place and Time, as they relate to Divine Providence, which orders all things in the beſt manner.

To conceive otherwiſe, ſeems to ſtrike at the Divine Sovereignty over his Creatures, and tie him up by the ſame Laws that they are bound, and preſcribe Rules (dependent on weak fallible human Judgment) to Infallible Omnipotence; for wherever there is Dependence and Subordination, for Effects to plead their own Fitneſs, as the Rule or Law of their Being, is arrogating an Independence either in Eſſence or Operation, is thruſting itſelf out of the proper Order of Nature, aſſuming what belongs to another, in which there is no Fitneſs or Congruity; but in affecting Equality with the Firſt Cauſe becomes a Robbery of God. This the Angels once did, and Man now does.

I judge no one but myſelf, yet cannot help thinking many Expreſſions uſed in this Controverſy, as no way reaſonable, fitting, or congruous to the Divine Nature: That things are not good, becauſe God commanded; a Rule antecedent to the Will

of God; that Omnipotence cannot do ſo and ſo; an Omnipotent Being devoid of all eſſential and natural Juſtice; that it is not the Will of God that obliges to do poſitive things commanded, but the Intellectual Nature of him who is commanded; that if any Commander go beyond the Sphere and Bounds that Nature ſets him, his Commands will not at all oblige; that the Wiſdom of God is as much God, as the Will of God; and whether of theſe two things in God, that is, his Will or Wiſdom, ſhould depend on the other, will be beſt determined from the ſeveral Natures of them; that Wiſdom hath in itſelf the Nature of a Rule or Meaſure, but Will is not only a blind and dark thing, but alſo indefinite and indeterminate; that Will is a plumbean flexible Rule.

Theſe, and many others, when applied to the Divine Nature, are altogether ſhocking and blaſphemous; a Language unbecoming Chriſtians or reaſonable Creatures, in ſpeaking what they know not; as if the eſſential Attributes could be divided, or act in oppoſition to each other: Whereas the whole Eſſence is but one undivided Act, without the leaſt Shadow of Compoſition or Diviſion; to Will and to Cauſe, Volition and Omnipotence, cannot be ſeparated in God; though Men in their progreſſive way of Reaſoning, not being able to conſider more than one Subject at a time, attempt to do it. But where a Nature is eſſentially and indiviſibly one, nothing is before or after, but unchangeably the ſame; Will is immutably wiſe, and Wiſdom determinately juſt; and in neither is, or can be, any thing blind, dark, indefinite, or indeterminate.

His Will is called arbitrary, only from the Sovereignty over his Works, to whoſe Pleaſure they muſt, and becauſe it is ſo, they ought, to ſubmit: And as his Nature is infinite Perfection, he cannot go beyond the Bounds of it, for he cannot deny him-

himſelf, nor require any thing contrary to himſelf, or what is immutably juſt and good, that being of his Eſſence; therefore his Commands at all times oblige, becauſe it is his Will and Pleaſure; and not the Nature of Things, which is nothing but the Rank and Order this ſame Will and unconfined Pleaſure has given them.

No one can ſay that Creation was neceſſary, for then the Almighty would not be a Free Agent; and if he acted with perfect Liberty, he could be under no Neceſſity of making Things in the exact Frame they now are: Therefore the Nature and adhering Relation which Things have, are not from themſelves, but from him who ſo framed them; and whoſe Mind has infinite Reaſons for all his Acts, utterly unknown to us: Therefore the Law is not from the neceſſary Nature of Things, but from him that made them what they are; the preſent Order is natural, but its Appointment, that it is ſo, wholly from God; and the Obligation cannot be from Relations, but from him who gives and alters them at his Pleaſure; otherwiſe the Divine Will would be of no Uſe; for if nothing be conſequent to it, it could not be the Cauſe of any thing; which is contrary to the expreſs Teſtimony of God, and I hope of Reaſon alſo.

It was the Reſult of perfect Freedom that God made Man, he could have made him, what at preſent he is not, endued him with more or fewer Faculties; placed him farther from, or nearer to the angelick State; in Proportion to which there would have been a Change or a Difference in his Relation and Law, in that Rank or Order wherein he was conſtituted, according to which every Creature is intended and obliged to act; conſequently the Neceſſity of this Law muſt be referred to the Divine Will, as that alone determined the preſent State or Condition

Pſ. cxv. 3. & cxxxv. 6. dition of Man; *for he hath done whatſoever he pleaſed.*

We cannot ſafely conclude, that God neceſſarily made all Things as they are, leſt we take away any Degree of that perfect Liberty with which the Supreme Being muſt always act (in making every thing for his Pleaſure, and after the Counſel of his own Will) and thereby leave him the Power of Creating, but render the Proportions of created Beings of eternal Neceſſity, which muſt deſtroy the Freedom both of Counſel and of Will: Could he not have done otherwiſe, had it ſo pleaſed him?

And if moral Dependence be founded on Natural, it will follow that all moral Obligations ariſe from their Connexion to and Dependence on the Divine Pleaſure, by virtue of which all Eſſences, Proportions, and Relations ſolely exiſt; and if they depend on nothing elſe, then our Actions cannot be moral, becauſe agreeable or congruous to ſuch Relations, but only as they are conformable, and have a Reference to that Will, which appointed ſuch Relations; and the appointing Will, not the Relations or Fitneſſes themſelves, be the ultimate Rule and Ground of all Moral Obligation. And Biſhop *Wilkins*, I think, fully diſclaims all theſe eternal Reaſons in the following Words: "It is not the mere "Performance of *ſuch moral Duties* as are of na- "tural Obligation, unleſs they be done in Obedi- "ence to Chriſt as our *Lord* and *Lawgiver*, and "in Reliance upon him for his Pardon and Ac- "ceptance as our *Prieſt* and *Saviour*, that can make "us acceptable to Chriſt, or entitle us to the Name "of Chriſtians."

Serm. p. 51.

In God, his executive Power and efficacious Will admit not the leaſt formal Difference; for by his Will they are and were created; they are his Eſſence, the Will of God is Omnipotence, an Al-

mighty

mighty *Fiat*; he but ſpeaks, and it is done, his Word gives Being, his Word and his Acts are reciprocal; whatever he wills, immediately exiſts, in the Time and Manner he wills it; and as nothing can move the Will of God but his own Goodneſs, the very ſame with his Will and Eſſence (for were it moved by any thing without itſelf, it would not have the Supreme Perfection of independent Liberty, and acting freely) therefore he willeth nothing without himſelf; and all the Reaſons of Juſt or Good, extrinſick to the Divine Eſſence, are dependent on his Will, who decreed and appointed the Nature of Things (which is their Juſtice and Goodneſs) to be what it is.

For if they had an eternal neceſſary Fitneſs and Relation before this, they muſt be antecedent to the Will of God, and conſequently prior to, or of the Divine Eſſence, and muſt always continue to be ſo, which is blaſphemous to aſſert; but they are ſubſequent to the Divine Will, therefore their Truth is cauſed by, and depends upon it; for as he gives Being to all Things, all Proportions, that belong to ſuch Being, muſt alſo depend upon the Divine Will; and that any Truths, natural or moral, belonging to any created Object or Term, could be antecedent to it, is impoſſible and falſe; becauſe the Will of God is the Cauſe of all Things, and the Effect cannot be prior to the Cauſe.

And when the great Maintainers of eternal and immutable Morality vouchſafe to quit their Metaphyſical Religion, they teach the ſame thing; "To prevent all "Miſtake (ſays Dr. *Cudworth*) I ſhall again remember, "that where it is affirmed that the Eſſences of all "Things are Eternal and Immutable, which Doctrine "the Theological Schools have conſtantly avouched; "this is only to be underſtood of the intelligible Eſ- "ſences or *Rationes* of Things, as they are the Objects "of the Mind; and that there neither is, nor can be "any

Morality p. 284.

" any other Meaning of it than this, that there is " an eternal Knowledge and Wiſdom, or an eternal " Mind or Intellect, which comprehends within itſelf " the ſteady and immutable *Rationes* of all Things, " and their Verities, from which all particular Intel- " lects are derived, and on which they do depend; " but not that the conſtitutive Eſſences of all created " Things were eternal and uncreated; as if God in " creating of the World, did nothing elſe, but as " ſome ſarcaſtically expreſs it, *Sartoris inſtar rerum* " *eſſentias veſtire exiſtentiâ*, only clothed the Eternal, " Increated, and Antecedent Eſſences of Things, " with a new outſide Garment of Exiſtence, and not " created the whole of them; and as if the conſtitu- " tive Eſſences of Things could exiſt apart ſeparate- " ly from the Things themſelves."

Certainly God was eternal, and knew his Wiſdom and his Works; but if the Eſſences of Things did not exiſt before he created them, neither they, nor their Relations could be in their Nature eternal, nor immutable, becauſe God could have produced Natures otherwiſe than he has done, and the only eternal, immutable, and neceſſary Reaſon of Things, ends in this, that God made them what they are; they are the ſole Reſult of his Will, ſubſequent to, and dependent on it; this is the true and only *Ratio*; and in any other View, they are indeed Objects of the Mind, but without Reaſons, Exiſtence or Nature; not *Rationes*, but mere *Entia Rationis*.

For if the Truth of Things be ſubſequent to the Divine Will, and the Truth of Things be the Reaſons of them, then their Reaſons could not be of eternal Neceſſity; the Truth and Reaſon of any Thing, conſiſting in being what it is, and that, becauſe ſo willed of God: The Conſequence of ſuch Appointment could have no Force or Obligation prior to it; otherwiſe Relations of Things would be without

out their Exiſtence, and Accidents ſubſiſt without a Subject.

If it be ſaid that the Reaſons of Things are eternal, becauſe God foreknew and predetermined what he would do, it is ſaying no more, than that from Eternity neceſſarily exiſted an all-wiſe and perfect Being; and that God had an eternal univerſal Knowledge; but if it ſubſiſted only in him, then it was God; if it had a different Subſiſtence, there was ſomething neceſſary and eternal beſides him; and yet the Reaſon and Truth of Things are not God, though they are an Effect and Communication of his Will to his Creatures; therefore could have no Exiſtence before the Things themſelves exiſted: For otherwiſe, their Eſſences, Perfections, Diſtinctions, Reſpects, and Operations, which is their Reaſon, muſt pre-exiſt likewiſe, and Creature and Creator, be one and the ſame.

And if the Reaſons of Things be eternal, ſo will be their moral Difference, for the one depends upon the other; it is for certain Reaſons that ſome things are morally Evil, others morally Good; and then *Rationes Boni & Mali ſunt æternæ.* If eternal, they muſt have Exiſtence, and if they did exiſt, there muſt have been an evil Principle from all Eternity. Or if God's Eternal Knowledge roſe from any intelligible Species, Repreſentations diſtinct from himſelf, there would be ſomething real, as well as eternal beſide him.

It is a Fondneſs for this kind of Divinity, that has renewed *Platoniſm* among us, in the Enquiry concerning Ideas, Exemplars, Archetypes, *&c.* *Plato* defined Ideas to be Infinite, Immaterial, Immutable, and Eternal, ϰ᾽ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταυτὰ ὄν, *always the ſame in Being*; and we have had learned Men taking great pains to prove the Eternity of the Archetypal Models of the Works of God in the Mind Divine; diſputing whether they are real Entities, and whether they

Timæus p. 49. Norris's Ideal World.

they have a phyſical or metaphyſical Entity; whether they are poſitive actual Beings, can act, think, or will, and whether they are the operative Cauſes of things: All which is Wantonneſs in Religion, uſeleſs Science, and unprofitable Diſpute.

And the Determination before given muſt take place here alſo; either they are immanent in, the ſame with the Divine Eſſence, Power and Will, which can neither be compounded nor divided; or they are ſome way different from it; and then ſomething with a real Entity will be eternal beſides God: And the Chambers of Heaven furniſhed with theſe Models of the World, and his Works, and nothing being in vain, they muſt be neceſſary to direct his Operations; and he who could ſpeak a thouſand of Worlds into Being, muſt ſtand in need (like a poor Artificer) in order to do nothing raſhly, to make the Model before he made the Work: Or indulging ſo vain a Suppoſition, of what ſervice or uſe could they be to Created Intelligences? They can have no Influence on the Ectypal Copies, when finiſhed; Ideas can lay no Obligation on things after they are created, no more than the Models of St. *Peter*'s and St. *Paul*'s Temples do on thoſe Edifices, or the Beholders and Admirers of them.

This Argument would alſo prove too much; for if all that God foreknew had theſe real Archetypes, then there would be eternal Exemplars of every Beaſt or Inſect, as much as things of a moral Nature: Eternal, Moral, and Natural Evil; Eternal Good and Bad Actions; Exemplars of all the Ectypal Copies, coeval with the other Ideas of God: And being certain Contemplations, and real Determinations of future poſſible things, ſuch things muſt neceſſarily come to paſs, ſince there are no Ideas of abſolute Non-entity; ſo by this Rule, there can be nothing in this inferior viſible World, but what had (and being Eternal, now has) its Idea

Idea in the ſuperior intelligible World of Divine Ideas. Nothing being contingent, but God foreknew it, and he (it ſeems) could not know it, without an eternal entifical Idea of it; and Moral Evil being as much a Reality as Moral Goodneſs, muſt have its eternal immutable Archetype.

What is all this but Enthuſiaſm or Metaphyſical Madneſs in Divinity? A Philoſophy which the Apoſtle condemns, as Science falſly ſo called; intended to amuſe and deceive unwary Minds, and raiſed as a Battery to attack Revelation from; Words to no Profit but ſubverting the Hearers, and increaſing unto more Ungodlineſs.

Nevertheleſs, the Foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, his Word and Commands, his Promiſes and Aſſiſtance, his Acceptance and Rewards, depend not on the ſandy Foundation of Relations, Fitneſs, or Ideas of things; an all-wiſe Lawgiver has given us a Rule of acting, pointed out the Differences of Good and Evil, taught us whatever is uſeful to Knowledge or to Duty, communicated what is neceſſary of his own Being and Perfections. And except he had made ſuch Revelation, we ſhould never have attained the leaſt Notion of Spiritual Entity, Moral Fitneſs, or Ideal Goodneſs, nor have had any Meaſure of Good or Evil. As an all-good Creator he has an abſolute Right to command; as dependent Creatures we are obliged to unlimited Obedience; and nothing but his Will can be a Law to an intelligent Creature; nothing elſe can induce an Obligation. This is the only Moral Fitneſs Man is able to diſcern, to walk by the Rule which God has given; his Will is a perfect Law, and whether we ſhould inquire of and obey God or Man, judge ye: He has declared that *the ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God; but thoſe things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our Children for ever, that we may all do the Words of this*

this Law. By this Law he will judge us, and diſpenſe its Sanctions of Reward and Puniſhment: And this alone conſtitutes the whole Moral Intellectual Syſtem, both in Knowledge and Action.

But further: It is impoſſible that this Doctrine of eternal Fitneſſes, Reaſons, Relations, *&c.* ſhould be the Means of coming at Divine Knowledge.

I. Becauſe God affirms the contrary.

II. The Immutability of Relations is inconſiſtent with the Divine Proceedings.

III It does not give us a true Account of Morality in human Actions.

IV. It is not a Means whereby Men ever did or could arrive at the Knowledge of Divine Things.

V. The Reaſons and Relations of Things never were ſuppoſed to have the obligatory Force of a Law, even in the Opinion of the wiſeſt Heathens, and therefore could not be to them a Meaſure or a Rule of acting.

As to the *Firſt*, It is a Character which the Almighty aſſumes to Himſelf, through the whole Scripture, of being the only Teacher and Inſtructor; the Rule, the Law, the Light, and Life of Men. He directs to nothing but his revealed Word, to ſearch for, and find eternal Life. He communicates not himſelf by eternal Fitneſſes, but by his Son, *For no Man knoweth the Father ſave the Son, and he to whomſoever the Son will reveal him.* This is the Truth (the only Way of knowing God) and they who hear not and believe not God's Word, do ſo only, *becauſe they are not of God.*

Mat. xi. 27.

John viii. 47.

Deut. xxix. 29. It is ſaid, *The ſecret things of the Lord belong unto the Lord, but the things which are revealed belong unto us.* The ſecret Will is the Meaſure of his Operations; and not only the Things he wills, but the Motives and Reaſons of his Will are unknown

known to, and cannot be penetrated by us. But the things which are revealed belong unto us; that which he reveals is the Law and Rule of our Operation, Offices, and Duties towards him. It is not the Meaſure of God's Efficacy or Power, nor the Reaſons of all his Actings towards his Creatures; but it is the ſole Rule, Reaſon, and Meaſure of all their Actings towards him, as determining what they ought to do, what not to do.

Again; God declares, *That he worketh all things according to the counſel of his own Will— And hath made known to us the Myſtery of his Will, according to his good pleaſure which he hath purpoſed in himſelf.* Eph. i. 11. Ver. 9. The Working of God is according to the Counſel of his own Will; that ſecret Will which no Cauſe or Reaſon can be aſſigned for; and full of myſterious Wiſdom, which he hath purpoſed in himſelf, therefore not declared but in ſuch manner as ſeemed beſt to his good Pleaſure: But the ſublime and myſterious Reaſons are within himſelf undeclared, therefore no Cauſe phyſical or moral can be given of them; for this his good Pleaſure and ſovereign Independency purpoſed in it ſelf: And tho' the Divine Will be the abſolute Cauſe of all things, and full of Reaſons as to their admirable Dependence and Subordinations; yet there muſt not be the leaſt Shadow of Reaſon aſſigned as the Cauſe or Motive of it, further than he hath made it known unto us: To inquire further is Vanity; to determine otherwiſe, Preſumption.

Secondly, The Immutability of Relations is inconſiſtent with the Divine Proceedings.

Every Creature both Intelligent and Animal, in Heaven and in Earth, that we know of, have changed thoſe Relations they once ſtood in.

The Angels had a Freedom of Will, a Choice of Duty or of Sin; yet many of them by Diſobedience fell; they cannot now do good; they cannot

but ſin. Thoſe who preſerved their bleſſed State, are ſuppoſed to be now in a State of Impeccability; and conſequently the Proportions they hold to themſelves and other created Beings is much altered; their Relation to God nearer, and a Change made in their Law by a new and ſtricter Conformity of their Will to the Divine.

The ſame is true of Man; he was originally Upright and Perfect, and had a Law of unerring Obedience, ſuitable and fitting to the Excellency of his Nature, and which he was enabled to know and to perform, by diſcerning Good from Evil, with a Power and Freedom of Will to chooſe the one, and to refuſe the other: And in this State, the Relation between God and him was that of an innocent Creature, and a bountiful Creator, unerring Obedience, and Exemption from Death.

By Tranſgreſſion enſued an eſſential Alteration in his Moral Capacity; from leading a Divine Life to an Univerſal Degeneracy, a Corruption of Soul, and Proclivity to Sin, as has been fully acknowledged by many wiſer Heathens, as well as felt and complained of by Mankind in all Ages: He was now unable to know, or to fulfil the Law; and a new Relation between God and Man commenced, a guilty Creature, and an offended God; and then a new Law and Covenant ſuitable to his Condition was eſtabliſhed, which obliged to Repentance, and promiſed Pardon; the Relation then was, a Sinner penitent, and a God forgiving; and new Fitneſſes aroſe from the preſent Terms of recovering the divine Favour, and avoiding his Diſpleaſure.

In both Caſes the Law was what was beſt and fitteſt to be done, as the Reaſon and Nature of things then ſubſiſted; but when an Alteration in them enſued, ſo there did in the Law alſo, which was ordained by the Divine Will, and thence received

ceived its obliging Power. Nor is this any way incongruous to Divine Wiſdom, which had made free but not impeccable Agents, to adapt his Laws to their altered Condition; and is a Manifeſtation of his not being under any Neceſſity to preſcribe an immutable Law to a mutable Creature.

Yet to ſhew the Sovereign Independency of Will, as he was not obliged to interpoſe any Act of Omnipotence, for preventing the Apoſtaſy of either Nature, Angels or Men, yet his Dealings with them were very different; he (as is generally concluded) added to the glorious Condition of thoſe Angels, who kept their firſt State, by removing them beyond a Poſſibility of ſinning. Thoſe diſobedient Spirits, who wilfully departed from the Laws of their bleſſed Natures, had the legal Puniſhment inflicted on them, and are reſerved in Chains of everlaſting Darkneſs; and the regular Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments is the Effect of impartial Juſtice. The Law given to Man was alſo armed with Death, *In the Day that thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt die:* Yet the Sentence againſt the mighty but fallen Angels, was executed with unrelenting Juſtice, and yet ſtands unrepealed. They continue the ſad Examples of Vengeance, they may have a Proſpect of the Increaſe of their Torments, but none of their Ceaſing or Diminution. Whilſt to fallen Man was ſhewed an Overflowing of the Divine Compaſſion and Benignity, the Sentence reverſed, a Ranſom accepted, new Terms of Obedience offered, the moſt holy Creator reconciled to rebellious Creatures, admits them to a Poſſibility of attaining, intreats them to accept of a State far more bleſſed and glorious, than that which by Tranſgreſſion they had forfeited.

I could wiſh, therefore, thoſe Gentlemen who ſo earneſtly maintain the Eternal Neceſſity and Immutability of Relations and Law, Independent of the

Divine Will, would give us ſome Reaſons, why God ſhould be diſpoſed to pardon ſinful Men, yet not extend the ſame Grace to the apoſtate Angels.

We are told indeed by thoſe who pretend a deeper Inſight into the Nature of Angels, than the Scriptures have given us; That as the good Angels are unalterably determined to chooſe what is Good; ſo the evil Angels are as unmoveably determined ſtill to adhere to that which is Evil; they were both free indeed to chooſe either Good or Evil, but having long ſince fixed their Choice, there is no room for a Change of it. That ſuch as are the Judgments, which any thinking Beings paſs upon things, ſuch alſo are their Inclinations or Averſionsto the things judged of, and conſequently they cannot change their Choice. That the evil Angels who once thought Diſobedience to God better than Obedience, muſt always think it ſo, and being uncapable of Repentance or coming to a better Mind, are for that Reaſon uncapable of Forgiveneſs.

Now though perhaps it muſt be allowed, that Impenitence and Remiſſion of Sins are incompatible; that Sinners, whilſt they continue ſuch, cannot partake of the ſaving Mercies of God; that a State of Sin and a State of Glory are never to be reconciled: Yet we have no good ground to think the Angels ſo framed by their Natures, as that it is utterly impoſſible for the moſt powerful Grace of God to work in them Repentance; at leaſt what is ſaid of the Fixedneſs of their Choice, and the utter Incapacity they are in of thinking or chooſing otherwiſe than they once thought or choſe, is ſo deſtitute of any Foundation from what God has revealed about them, that it may be denied with as much Shew of Reaſon as it can be affirmed: Nay it is more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, if we might indulge our ſelves in ſuch Suppoſitions, that theſe revolted Angels who actually feel the Smart of their

Diſobe-

Diſobedience, have quite other Sentiments of it now, than they had before they ſwerved from their Duty; that their Notions of it are quite changed, ſince they have ſuffered for it, and that if a Reconciliation could be offered, they would readily accept it.

Another Reaſon by ſome aſſigned, why lapſed Men ſhould be capable, and the fallen Angels incapable of Redemption, is, that Man ſinned by the Suggeſtion of the Devil, but the Angels ſinned of themſelves without being ſeduced from their Duty by any Tempter. But God forbid, it ſhould be a concluſive Reaſon for the inevitable Perdition of any Creature, that it ſins of its own accord, without being ſollicited thereto by any Suggeſtions from without, ſince it is to be feared, if that accounts for this Doctrine, the Caſe of many Men would be deſperate: That is, ſo fall thoſe, who are ſo far from being overruled by any Temptation to Sin, that they lay themſelves open to it, that they invite it, that they work themſelves up with Pains and Difficulty to the Commiſſion of it, that they uſurp the Devil's Office, and tempt others to ſin.

Several other Reaſons are given, why God ſhould be inclined to pardon Men, rather than extend the ſame Act of Grace to rebellious Angels; for ſuch is the intolerable Pride of Man, that he is not content to accept of God's free Grace, without fanſying that he finds in himſelf ſome powerful Motive to diſpoſe God to be merciful to him. But if we would not think of our ſelves more highly than we ought to think; if we would think ſoberly, according as God has dealt to us the Meaſures of Faith; if we would regulate our Thoughts herein by the Light of Scripture, which alone can guide us in theſe ſupernatural Truths, we ſhall be convinced, that no other Ground for this Diſcrimination can be given, than the Will and Pleaſure

of God, *who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and who will have compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion.* No other good Reaſon can be aſſigned for the Preference of fallen Man to the apoſtate Angels, but that it ſo pleaſed God, *who worketh all things after the counſel of his own Will.*

Thus have Relations and Fitneſſes altered between Creature and Creator, which is the ſtrongeſt Light they can be placed in; and what holds in the greateſt Degree, muſt alſo in the leſs. Thus the Relations between Men and Men are changed, we may be obliged to act againſt thoſe very Inſtincts, which, from their deep Engraffment, have (though improperly) been called the Laws of Nature; a Man may be obliged to condemn his Father for violating a Divine Law, or ſacrifice an only Son, in Obedience to a Divine Command. And to mention no more, that moſt ſacred of human Relations, Marriage, on which ſo many others depend, is diſſolvable by the criminal Conduct of either Party; not to ſay, that the original Subjection of the Wife to the Husband, was the Puniſhment of Guilt.

Thus likewiſe the ſeveral Relations of Dominion in our publick Capacities, Maſter and Servant, King and Subject, Tyrant and Slave, had probably never been known, if Man had preſerved his primeval State.

The Relations betwixt Man and the Living Creatures are totally changed; God gave him an abſolute Dominion over them, *Gen.* i. 26. But he no ſooner rebelled againſt his Maker, than they rebelled againſt him, and are no longer ſubject to his Authority or Will: And this may have extended to the Beaſts themſelves, between whom there probably was at firſt no ſuch Antipathy, as is obſerved at preſent, nor cruel Rage and Appetite to devour one another.

The

The very Earth ſtood no longer in the ſame Relation to Man, but became ſtubborn and unfruitful, brought forth Briers and Thorns; and Man, inſtead of enjoying with Eaſe its ſpontaneous and abundant Productions, was condemned to be the miſerable Tiller of it; *In the Sweat of his Face, and in Sorrow, to eat the Fruits of it all the Days of his Life.*

So far from Truth is that Doctrine of the Immutability of thoſe Relations we ſtand in to God or one another, that an Alteration has happened in them all; betwixt God and Man, Man and Man, Man and the Creatures, and the Brute Creatures with one another.

And from this Change in Relation, not from any eternal Fitneſs of things, flowed *New Duties and Obligations*. As for Inſtance: Prayer is a reaſonable, fit, and proper Offering to the Supreme Being, in this Degeneracy of Nature, to ſupply our Wants, ſtrengthen our Infirmities, pardon our Tranſgreſſions, and accept our imperfect Obedience. But in Man's primeval State, when he clearly beheld the Perfections of the Deity, exactly fulfilled the Laws and Obligations reſulting from them, poſſeſſed the fulleſt Happineſs his Order of Being was capable of: Then Gratitude and Praiſe were the ſuitable Returns to the gracious Beſtower of ſuch Bleſſings. He had no Guilt to produce Sorrow or Repentance, no additional Perfections to ask for the Exaltation of his Nature; and where there is no want of Good, nor Evil felt, nor Fear apprehended, there is no Room for Petition or Prayer.

We read of no Duties in the Angelick State, but Obedience and Adoration; and the latter ſeems chiefly to conſiſt, in never-ceaſing Hallelujahs of Praiſe and Thankſgiving *to him that ſits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever*, and with the loudeſt Voices, bleſſing the God of Angels and of Men: Whereas we underſtand not that the bad

Angels ever pray for Mercy, that they repent, or that (as being perhaps excluded from any Covenant) there is even Hope in Hell; for they have no Paſſions but Guilt, Hatred, Fear, and horrid Apprehenſions.

Whereas in Man's altered Condition, Prayer, Repentance, and Thankſgiving are all congruous to the new Relation he ſtands in to God, who now requires, and has promiſed to accept them; not from any eternal Reaſons of things, or immutable Relations, or any natural Fitneſs in themſelves, as a Means to attain the End; for nothing we can offer is meritorious, or in itſelf deſerving of Pardon or eternal Life; but they are the Terms or Conditions the Divine Will has preſcribed, and therefore what infinite Mercy will reward. And hence only ariſe their Fitneſs, Obligation, or Merit of Acceptance.

Thirdly, This Doctrine does not give us a true Account of Morality in human Actions, in making Good and Evil to be conſtituted in the Eternal Relation and Nature of things, which we have ſeen are neither eternal nor immutable; but new Relations, and conſequently new Moral Duties, have commenced in the Intellectual Moral World. Yet *Eternal* and *Variable* are contradictory Terms: In all Created Beings there is a Change, in the Uncreated only is an eternal Stability.

Morality therefore muſt be relative to ſomething elſe, which is its proper Meaſure and Rule, and its Eſſence muſt conſiſt in its Conformity therewith: But the only perfect Meaſure of Morality is the Law, and that not of Men, but of God; and all Actions are morally good or evil, as they are referred in their End, Object, Circumſtances, and have Relation to it, and not otherwiſe. Whatever by the Divine Law is Good, can never be made Evil; what is Evil cannot be made Good; what by this Law is Good or Evil, cannot be made Indifferent; and is therefore

the

the only immutable univerſal Rule of Moral Goodneſs. When therefore the Author of *the Religion of Nature Delineated*, ſays, " That tho' Men, after " long and laborious Enquiry, have not yet agreed " upon any one Rule, with which comparing their " Actions, it might appear whether they are good, " evil, or indifferent, yet one certainly there muſt " be;" Does it not evidently ſhew the Defect of Natural Religion, in the moſt eſſential Point? § 1. p. 7.

That the Rule of Moral Goodneſs muſt be perfect, is evident, becauſe a defective Meaſure cannot be applied, and is therefore no Meaſure at all: And it muſt be univerſally comprehenſive, ſo as to include all Duties and Offices, with their Principles, Circumſtances, and End, otherwiſe it muſt be imperfect; for there would be Moral Duties to which the Law of Morality did not extend; which is a Contradiction. And if the Nature of Good requires it to be perfect, in all its Cauſes and Parts, the Meaſure and Rule of it muſt likewiſe be perfect; every Defect is evil, and that cannot be the Rule or Law of Good.

No created Reaſon therefore can be a ſufficient Rule for Moral Goodneſs, ſince it is a Part of imperfect corrupt Nature, and cannot but partake of Imperfection and Corruption; and for ſuch Nature to attain Perfection, would not be natural but ſupernatural; whence all the Good we now do, is not from Nature but by Grace. This alſo appears from the innumerable Defects in the Laws which Reaſon has ever preſcribed in the Object, Manner, Principles, and End of Moral Goodneſs: So that they have always ſtood in need of many Corrections and Alterations; therefore cannot be any Meaſure or Criterion of Moral Virtue. The Law of God only is univerſal, ſo as to comprehend and reach all Caſes; therefore that only can be uniform, unchangeable, eternal: Whereas all the Laws of Na-

Nature and of Nations, have been defective, ſtood in need of Reſtrictions or Alterations, have therefore ever been various and mutable, according to the different Circumſtances of Time, Place, and People.

Among the Heathens, the ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινὸς, *the Common Law*, was no more than the Precepts conveyed down by the Poſterity of *Noah*, which ſtill received new Light from a Converſe with the *Jews*, and the Books of *Moſes*: For the Decalogue may be ſaid to contain the whole Moral Law, a Summary of what was given to Man at the Beginning; to which all Duties in Piety to God, or Juſtice to each other, may be referred, and deduced from: What it commands is good, what it forbids is evil; what no Power on Earth can alter or make indifferent. And to ſay there were any religious Truths antecedent to Revelation, is begging the Queſtion, and a Falſhood.

Hence all the Meaſures of Difference and Perfection in Acts, are to be judged of only from their Conformity to the Divine Law and Will. Theſe being the very Reaſon, or (as the Schools ſpeak) the formal Idea of all Moral Good, in its Matter, Manner, Principle, or End; there being no other Rule whereby they can be meaſured. Theſe are their Canon (κανων, an exact Dimenſion whereby they meaſured Land) and what directs them to their laſt End, which is the very Foundation, or firſt Principle of Moral Goodneſs: A Sin is nothing elſe but voluntarily Acting againſt this Rule, and in that conſiſts its Moral Evil.

For the Morality of an Action does not depend upon the Underſtanding, becauſe our knowing a thing is not the Reaſon it is good or evil; no more does the Nature of an Action upon the Will, becauſe the willing a bad Action to a good End, does not take away the eſſential Malignity of Sin. But

in

in both, the knowing a thing to be our Duty, and therefore chooſing it, conſtitutes the moral Goodneſs of it; the refuſing it, its moral Evil.

The late celebrated Author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, defines it thus, § 1. *p.* 7. "That "Act, which may be denominated morally good "or evil, muſt be the Act of a Being capable of "diſtinguiſhing, chooſing, and acting for himſelf; "or more briefly, of an intelligent and free Agent; "whence the ſame Act that is moral in Man, would "not be ſo in Angels, who act determinedly; and "Morality does not conſiſt in the eternal Nature "and Reaſon of things."

In a Free Agent, what makes an Action moral to him, is his chooſing of it as a Means to the End; this makes an Action his own, (and thence *Mores*, Morals, or the Manners of Men) of which as a Rational Creature he is able to give an account, why in the matter of Duty or of Sin he preferred one Motive to another; when he chooſes a good Action as a Means to diſcharge his Duty and the End of his Being, it is moral Goodneſs: And as when the Will is bad, an Action cannot be good; ſo the chooſing even a good Action to a bad End, makes it to him moral Evil.

The Author of our Beings has ſhewn to Man his ultimate Happineſs, or final End, revealed the Means neceſſary to attain it, which are his Laws, and thence is ſuperinduced an Obligation to obey them; and added the Enforcement of Rewards and Puniſhments to determine our Choice to an Acceptance of his Laws or Obligation of his Will. The Means therefore are fit and reaſonable for a moral Agent to chooſe, as neceſſary to attain his higheſt Good, the only Fitneſs of an Action being its Relation to this End; the End is of God's Revealing, the Means of his Appointment, and their Relation to the End makes them fit, congruous,

ous, and reaſonable; and our chooſing them as a Means to attain that End, is what makes them to us moral Actions; as our inward Judgment approving or diſapproving the Choice of ſuch Means, as they tend to the Advancement or Obſtruction of ſuch ultimate End, is what is called Conſcience; as perceiving, or being Self-conſcious, that herein we act agreeably or diſagreeably to what we are, to our Nature, as Rational Creatures, and our Order in the Intellectual World.

It is true that the Duties of the ſecond Table have eſpecially obtained the Name of Moral; but it is an utter Abuſe of the Word to fix it to Duties which oblige naturally, and are not enjoined by any poſitive Law, but ſuppoſed to be antecedent to Revelation. It being this Choice that conſtitutes and denominates any Action Moral, and which is the formal Notion of Virtue, as a fit Means choſen to a right End; ſo *Simplicius* defines it. "For this Reaſon "Virtue, which is the proper Happineſs and Per- "fection, is called ἀρετη, i. e. αἱρετὴ, a Name "which hath great Affinity to a Word that ſigni- "fies *Eligible*, not only becauſe Virtue is properly "the Object, but alſo becauſe it is the Effect of "our own Choice." And the higheſt Virtue or Religion, is chooſing Means relating to Man's final Happineſs, as a Rule of Action, and Law of Obligation, in being the Will of God, and with an Intention to pleaſe him, as his Rewarder or Puniſher; whatever is not done with a View, and as a Means to that End, may be an Action of Chance, Indifference, or Stupidity; but is neither fit, moral, nor religious.

In Epict. c. 1.

And by this Divine Moral Law muſt be determined, the Good or Evil of every deliberate Action, by the End it is directed to, or the Diſpoſition of the Will in performing it: Hence the Works of Man in Innocence were good, as they ſhall

ſhall alſo be in Glory: Under the Dominion of corrupt Nature they are Evil; under Grace they are Good or Evil; as the Agent obſerves the Law, and not one of them all, as a Means to the End, is indifferent; for it is the Rectitude or Pravity of the Soul and Will, intentionally fulfilling or neglecting this Law, that conſtitutes an Act morally Good or Evil; for no Action proceeding from a Will not rightly diſpoſed, can be good, the Principle is corrupt, and the Action (whatever Life or Virtue it may appear to have) is dead, a Carcaſe without a Soul; the End is the great Object of Action, and the only Good End is the Glory of God; where that is not in the Intention, there is no Virtue in the Action.

Fourthly, It is not a Means whereby Men ever did or could arrive at the Knowledge of Divine Things.

The Works of God are the Wiſdom of God; the Suitableneſs of their Powers and Operations to the End for which he appointed them, is their Fitneſs: But their Eſſence, Diſtinction, Order and Operations, whereby they are diſpoſed, and work as Means towards the End, are the Acts and Secrets of Omnipotent Will, a Wiſdom hid in Heaven; and there would be little Difference between the Human Nature and Divine, if our Thoughts could penetrate them. But whatever Difference there is between the Works of God and Man, ſo much is there in their Reaſons and Wiſdom alſo; for as the Divine Will is the ſole Meaſure of Acting towards his Creatures, and what gives Perfection to all his Works, and the Rule of his Working full of infinite Counſel, it cannot be poſſible for us to comprehend or explain it; they are ſo far removed from our Apprehenſion, that we might never pretend to fathom the vaſt Abyſs with the Line of human Reaſon: For by how much ſtronger God is than Man,

Cl. Alex. Strom. 6. p. 697.

Man, ſo far ſhort and weak muſt human Reaſon be, when it ſpeaks not of God, but only of Things relating to him, even his Power or Works; for all the Knowledge we have of God is from God.

But if Morality depend upon Fitneſſes, and Reaſon is to be the ſole Diſcoverer and Judge of them; we ſhould wander eternally, in following a Guide which led the firſt Man into Polytheiſm and Idolatry, as it does the Moderns into Scepticiſm and Infidelity; an *Ignis fatuus*, that never could diſtinguiſh the Difference of things, but called Evil Good, and Good Evil, taught there was no Sin in Fornication, Inceſt, Sodomy, Community of Wives, *&c.* Or with the Stoicks, held ſome things good, ſome bad, others ἀδιάφορα, *neither good nor bad*, and ἀδιάφορα, *indifferent*, amongſt which were placed all Kinds of the moſt unnatural Uncleanneſs, as being a Medium betwixt Vice and Virtue.

And it has been evidently ſhewn that no Reaſon can judge of the ſecret Fitneſs and Relations of Things, the Myſteries whereof Nature is compoſed, from our being ſo entirely in the Dark as to the inward Compoſition of all Bodies, even the minuteſt Part of Matter. We cannot judge or determine concerning them with any Degree of Certainty, but from their outward Appearances and ſenſible Effects; when we attempt any thing beyond this, all our Reaſonings are full of Confuſion and Uncertainty; can anſwer no End but that of uſeleſs Speculation and Amuſement; and to make Religion dependent on what we are ſo entirely ignorant of, is to render it the moſt precarious thing in the World.

Vid. Locke, l. 4. c. 3. § 26. &c. p. 332.

The ſeveral Powers, Efficacies, and Ways of Operation, whereby the Effects we daily ſee, are produced, are hid from us, in ſome Things by being too remote, and in others by being too minute. What Sorts of Furniture and Inhabitants there may be in the upper viſible Orbs, we cannot ſo much as gueſs

gueſs at; of thoſe Bodies which fall under the Cognizance of our Senſes, are neareſt to us, and moſt under our Command, we cannot have any adequate Ideas: Nor ſhall we ever be able to diſcover general, inſtructive, and unqueſtionable Truths concerning them; Certainty and Demonſtration are Things we muſt not in theſe Matters pretend to.

And as our Ignorance muſt increaſe proportionably as Things are remote from us, much more ſo muſt it do of the ſpiritual World, whereof we have no Cognizance, nor can frame to ourſelves any diſtinct Ideas of their Eſſence, Rank, or Order; yet infinitely beyond theſe is the Divine Mind and Will, whoſe infinite Reaſons, Counſels and Deſigns, muſt for ever remain unknown to his Creatures, farther than he is pleaſed to declare them; what were the Purpoſes of his Will, wherein the fixed and regular Connexion of Cauſes and Effects conſiſts; how Cauſes work regularly and Effects conſtantly flow from them; with the neceſſary Dependence one upon another, up to the firſt inviſible Cauſe. In none of theſe, or even how the Mind operates upon the Body, can we have any ſcientifick Knowledge; we have ſcarce room to gueſs, ſo great is our Ignorance.

Our whole Stock of Knowledge reaches no farther than this, that they are the arbitrary Determinations of that all-wiſe Agent, who has made them to be, and operate as they do: But in what manner is not needful, or without Revelation poſſible for us to comprehend: For to create is the ſole Prerogative of the Supreme Agent; the different Modes of Dependence, and Relations of Being, are the Reſult of Omnipotence and abſolute Will: And therefore, what our moral and ſupernatural Dependence is, muſt be impoſſible for the natural Man to know, without a ſupernatural Aſſiſtance; and *this God worketh in us both to will and to do* (not neceſſarily but

Phil. ii. 13. but freely) *of his good Pleaſure*: How is it then poſſible from any View or Comprehenſion we have of Nature or the Univerſe, to form a ſufficient Rule or Law of Acting, to fulfil the End of our Being? Can there be a Law without Science, or Obligation without Evidence? Or either Science or Evidence concerning Things we have no Proof of, neither Faculties to enquire after, nor Abilities to comprehend?

It is ſufficient to ſay the God of Nature could not intend this as a Means to come at the Knowledge of Divine Truths, or that the Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things conſtitute, or of themſelves are an Indication of a Divine Law; or that the World from them could tranſcribe a Rule of Duty; becauſe the Ancients could never carry their Philoſophizings on the true Frame and Courſe of Nature to any tolerable Degree of Perfection, and conſequently not attain a competent Knowledge of the Author or End of their Beings, if it was to be learned from the Fitneſs and Dependence of Things; or were the Fact poſſible, yet the Study and Apprehenſion of theſe Subjects is ſo embarraſſing and difficult, that few could diſcern enough to be of real Uſe, and the Bulk of Mankind none at all. And as the Obligations to Duty muſt vary according to Mens perceiving ſuch Fitneſſes, the Conſequence would be, that moſt Men would be freed from all Obligation.

Or if the Differences in Things are to be Indications of the Univerſal Law (that which binds every one) and declarative of its Obligation without which it could not be a Law; it were impoſſible there ſhould be ſuch Difficulty, in diſcerning what was ſo evident, ſuch Doubts and Perplexities even among civilized Nations about what was lawful or unlawful, juſt or unjuſt, which conſiſt (if any

thing

thing does) in the Meaſure and Relation of things. Such amazing Contradictions in the Manners of the World, that ſome ſhould do with an excuſing and applauding Conſcience, what others were ſhocked at the Thoughts of, as abominable and deteſtable: This could not be poſſible, did the Law come by this means, for then would its Obligations and Sanction come thence alſo, and, as being natural, be equally coercive to all: Yet we ſee there are Millions of God's Rational Creatures, who have not the leaſt Perception of them, diſcern no ſuch Rule to judge of the moral Rectitude or Obliquity of their Actions, but act contrary to them without Knowledge or Remorſe: Now that cannot be a Law, which neither inſtructs, reforms, nor carries Obligation with it.

Lactantius will have Power and Wiſdom ſo nearly related, that if a Man could underſtand divine things, he alſo could perform them; and as he cannot *do*, ſo neither can he *underſtand* the Works of God, which are known only to himſelf. As the Divine Nature, ſo the Divine Wiſdom is perfect: But human Wiſdom, confined to the Body, and clogged with Paſſions, is full of Error and Darkneſs. L. 7. § 2. p. 599.

In reſpect then of all thoſe Intelligibles which tranſcend the Mind, God muſt be the Intellectual Agent, to enable it, by his own Notices and Aids, to contemplate Divine things; for it cannot, by any Thought or Enquiry of its own, attain the leaſt Idea of a Divine Condition, nor of what is ſaid to be neareſt to it, the Angelick State, without a ſuitable Inſtruction or Irradiation. The Soul has Powers and Faculties to receive certain Degrees of ſuch Truths, but only potentially, not reduced into Act, but by the Intervention of ſome Agent; as Colours are diſcernible, but not actually ſeen, without the Help and Interpoſition of Light. A Doctrine, which *Plato* frequently repeats: "That the Mind Epinom. p. 989.

Repub. 6. p. 483, &c. "of Man needs Divine Illumination to underſtand "Divine things, as much as the Eye wants the Light "of the Sun to ſee viſible things."

From all which we may ſafely conclude, that without Revelation, no Fitneſſes, *&c.* of things, would have ever brought the World to a Knowledge of God, the Relations we ſtand in to him, the Obligations ariſing, or the Duties neceſſarily flowing from them.

Fifthly, The Reaſons and Relations of things never were ſuppoſed by the wiſer Heathens to have the obligatory Force of a Law; and therefore could not be to them a Meaſure or a Rule of acting.

The only adequate Notion of a Law (as already ſhewn) is the Will of a rightful Superior communicated to Intelligent Beings, as a Rule of their Actions; both Law and Obligation neceſſarily ſuppoſing (ſays Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*) the Authority of a Superior Being. And no one can have ſuch Authority, but he that is Supreme, and has abſolute Dominion over all; *of whom, through whom, and for whom are all things.* For every Creature having Bounds to its Eſſence, has alſo Bounds to its Dominion and Operation; a limited Cauſe muſt neceſſarily have a limited Power and Activity. Except Man had Being of himſelf, and a World of his own framing, he could not be a Rule to himſelf for the Determination of his Actions; but muſt be determined by the Law of his Maker for the Nature of his Actions as good or evil: For all moral Determination muſt ariſe from the Divine Will, expreſſed in his Moral Law; becauſe he gives Being to all, is the Life of Living things, the Reaſon of Rational things, and the Intelligence of Intellectual ones.

Vol. 2d, Serm. 58. p. 406.

The great Syſtem of Created Things has no Dominion, Power, or Influence over Man; they give him not Being, his Actions no way depend upon their Diſpoſition, no Meaſure of Law, or of moral Good

Good and Evil can be derived from them; but from him only, who is the Firſt Principle, the Directive Cauſe, the Source and Spring of Motion and Operation to all his Creatures. There can be no eternal Law, but the ſovereign Pleaſure of him from whom all other Beings receive not only Exiſtence, but their Eſſence, Nature, and Order; and whoſe Congruity, Fitneſs, Mode, Manner, or Relations of Exiſting, have neither Goodneſs, Counſel, or Intention, but what proceeds from him. They neither are, nor can frame Laws to themſelves or others, but are wholly directed by, and dependent on their firſt Cauſe and laſt End. To judge otherwiſe, is perverting all the Fitneſs and Order of Nature, for the Effect to bid defiance to its Cauſe, the Stream to renew its Fountain, to remove a Creature from the limited Rank wherein Nature has placed it, to the Throne and Dignity of the Creator.

When we ſay a thing is fit to be done, it muſt be as a Means to the End, and therefore a proper Motive to incline a rational Creature to do it, it being the higheſt Act of Reaſon to perform every thing in ſuch a manner as beſt anſwers the End of its Being, and is perfective of its Nature. But the Fitneſs is no conſtituent Part of the Law, has no Power to lay an Obligation; that can ariſe only from the Will of the Legiſlator, who has a right to preſcribe the Means, and a Power to oblige Conformity to it; or that Man, as well as the reſt of his Creatures, ſhould act in ſuch a manner, as he judges moſt fit and ſuitable to the Nature he had given him.

It is therefore a fruitleſs Diſtinction, tho' ſo ſtrenuouſly inſiſted on, that natural Laws are of greater Obligation than poſitive ones, becauſe they have an intrinſick Goodneſs in themſelves; whereas the other are good only becauſe commanded (not to ſay there was no moral Duty or Goodneſs antecedent to Revelation, and their being enjoined) for the formal

Reaſon of Obligation cannot poſſibly ariſe from the Goodneſs of a Law, but from the Authority and Will of the Impoſer; God commands a Thing in itſelf abſolutely indifferent, *i. e.* not commanded (for there is no moral Goodneſs in any thing antecedent to the Divine Will and Determination) the Thing is then as much a Law, as if it was never ſo good in its own Nature: He forbad the Eating of a Tree, which without the Prohibition had been indifferent, and the Tranſgreſſor was condemned for the Breach of the Law, though purely poſitive. God forbad the gathering of Sticks on the Sabbath, therefore the Man that gathered them was put to Death for it. In all Caſes it is the Will of God, and not the Goodneſs of the Thing, which induces the Obligation: No other Reaſon can be given for Obedience, becauſe that only can oblige to it; we cannot go farther, nor ſuppoſe a Law independent of it.

Call any thing a Duty or a Virtue, natural Religion or Law; yet we ſhall find the whole World, Jews and Heathens, conſidering the Obligation of it only from its being commanded; they did not appeal to Reaſon or Nature, or the concurrent Practice of the moſt civilized Nations, as a Rule or Meaſure to judge of this by, but traced it up to the Appointment of the firſt efficient Cauſe, that is, from the Authority and Declaration of the moſt holy and perfect Being, the Author, and ſovereign Lord of Nature; and expreſly taught, that the Parent and Governor of the Univerſe has implanted, declared, and commanded certain Things, particularly pointing them out, to be obſerved, by the Name of Good and Honeſt; and others to be perpetually avoided, under the Name of Evil and Diſhoneſt; and that from hence is the Law of Nature compoſed, its ſeveral Members growing together, as into one Body. That from this alone (not-

Vid. Selden de Jur. Nat. & Gent. juxt. Diſc. Ebr. l. 1. c. 8. p. 95.

(notwithſtanding the Multitude of Opinions and Judgments, ſprung up from the Operation and Uſe of human Reaſon) does the Obligation which is called Natural proceed; that ſome things are declared diſhoneſt, others Good, as from the Command of the Parent of Nature, and his Authority, by which all are bound: So they never ceaſe to be ſo, but Puniſhment follows the Violation of that, which by being commanded ought to be obeyed; as Rewards alſo do the Obſervation of it.

Thus *Cicero* ſays, *Hanc video ſapientiſſimorum fuiſſe ſententiam, &c.* This I perceive was the Opinion of the wiſeſt of Men, that Law (and he certainly ſpeaks of the Natural one) was neither deviſed by the Wit of Men, nor was any Decree of the People, but ſomething Eternal, that Wiſdom, which by its Commands and Prohibitions governs the whole Univerſe; therefore they ſay, this Principle and ultimate Law is the Mind of God, commanding or forbidding all Things: And he declares, that the Obligation of Law is not only more ancient than the Being of Men, but coeval with God who governs and preſerves the World; for the Divine Mind cannot be without Reaſon, nor Divine Reaſon without the Power of enacting what is Good and Evil. *Quæ vis non modo ſenior eſt, quam ætas populorum & civitatum, ſed æqualis illius, cælum atque terras tuentis, & regentis Dei. Neque enim eſſe mens divina ſine ratione poteſt, nec ratio divina non hanc vim in rectis pravisque ſanciendis habere.* And a little after, that a Thing did not commence to be a Law when it was written, but when it firſt aroſe; but it aroſe together with the Mind Divine. Wherefore the true and ſovereign Law, fit to command or prohibit, is the right Reaſon of the Sovereign *Jupiter*. So in that famous Paſſage, ſo often cited in favour of the Law of Nature; *Eſt quidem vera lex, recta ratio, naturæ congruens, &c.* he ſums

Leg. 2. n. 4.

Lactant. l. 6. c. 8. p. 525.

ſums it up in ſaying, *Deus hujus legis inventor, diſceptator, lator*; "That God was the Inventor, the "Judge, and Maker of it;" for there is but one common Maſter and Lord of all.

Here it is obſervable, that the Law *Naturæ congruens*, congruous, fit, or agreeable to Nature, is not ſuppoſed to be the Invention of Reaſon, or obvious from Nature, or conſtituted in the Fitneſs or Relation of things, but to be wholly the Mind and Will of God, as both the Efficient and Declarative Cauſe of it. And hence, *Secundum Deum vivere, & Deum ſequi*, are frequently taken for the ſame, as *vivere ſecundum naturam*, and even *ſecundum rationem*, *in Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and others; and *Hierocles*, in his Comment on the Verſes of *Pythagoras*, ſhewing what it is to obey Right Reaſon, makes this juſt Obſervation, that to obey Right Reaſon, and to obey God, is the ſame thing; for Nature, which is rational, having obtained divine Illumination, deſires thoſe things which the Divine Law determined; and a Mind guided by God, does not differ from the Will of God, but contemplating the Divinity and Splendour, does what ſhe does: So that he makes God, as by declaring his Will he commands Reaſon, to be the only Rule and Meaſure of Duty, and conſequently of Obligation.

And hence the Laws of Nature are ſometimes called *Common Notions*, but moſt frequently τὰς θείας νόμας, *the divine Laws*, or given by God: And that Reaſon receiving theſe Laws, becomes a moſt vigilant Judge to itſelf, whereby they ſeem rightly to denote the Power of Conſcience; namely, that from the Authority and Declaration of God there is ſuch a Relation or Conjunction between God and Man, whoſe Reaſon is thus informed and commanded, as to be conſcious to the Deity of diſcerning the Heads of that Univerſal Law, which perpetually bind, in being thus declared and commanded; as alſo conſequently

quently of the Obligation ſuperinduced by an Authority ſuperior to any human Power, and the Puniſhment appointed as a neceſſary Attendant on the Violation of it; for *conſcius*, in the Matter of Duty, is the ſame as *cum alio ſcius*, as *Nonius* expreſſes himſelf on this Word.

With this the wiſeſt Heathens agree. *Plato* ſays, "That the Sceptre of *Minos* in *Homer*, is nothing "elſe but the Doctrine received from *Jupiter*." For the ſame reaſon *Demoſthenes* calls Law in general, or the Foundation of all Law, *Poſitive* or *Natural*, among Men, ἕυρημα καὶ δῶρον Θεῦ, *the Invention and the Gift of God.* And *Dion*, Διὸς θεσμὸς, *the Ordinance of Jupiter.* And *Euripides* ſtyles the common Laws of Men, νόμιμα θεῶν, *the Laws of the Gods.* And many Expreſſions of the ſame Import occur among the ancient Poets, who abound in this Philoſophy. The *Platoniſts* alſo teach, Νῦς ἐστιν ὁ Νόμος διανομὴ, *that Law is the Diſtribution of the Mind or of God.* And that they were immutable, and of perpetual Obligation in their Opinion, ſeems to appear from what they teach of future Puniſhment. And it is reaſonable to conclude, they imagined the Laws which were violated, to be from the Gods, as well as the Puniſhment inflicted on the Violators. Nor muſt it be unobſerved, that the moſt famous Lawgivers of thoſe ancient Ages, *Minos*, *Solon*, *Draco*, *Charondas*, and others, thought they could give no Authority or Obligation to their Laws, had they not pretended to receive them from the Gods.

In Minoe. Orat. 1. adverſ. Ariſtogit. Orat. 80. In ἱκέτην. Vid. Stobæum Eclog. Phyſic. l. 1. c. 7. Proclus in Theolog. Plat. l. 5. c. 9.

And from the Obſervance of this Univerſal or Natural Law given by the Authority of God to our Firſt Parents, and from them handed down to their Poſterity (which preceded the Law of *Moſes*, and was afterwards incorporated with it) it is, that *Noah* was found juſt, and *Abraham* became the Friend of God. And *Origen* expreſly calls the Law of Nature, that which God ordained to Mankind.

Adverſ. Celſ. l. 5.

kind. So on that Paſſage in *Iſaiah*, *They have tranſ-*
Iſ. xxiv. 5. *greſſed the Laws, changed the Ordinances, broken the everlaſting Covenant*; which appertained to other Nations as well as the *Jews*, St. *Jerome*
In Iſaiam, l. 8. ſays; "Let the *Jews* hear this, who boaſt that they "alone received the Law of the Lord; that all "Nations in the World received the Law of Na"ture, *&c.*" But they had the written Law by *Moſes*.

For as to the univerſal, equally common Law of Mankind, the *Jews* never were of any other Opinion; but as often as they had Occaſion to mention it, their uſual Expreſſion was, "They were com"manded to the Sons of *Noah*, i. e. the whole Race "of Men, and the firſt Man *Adam* received them "from God." For they held that certain Natural Laws were immediately after the Creation, declared, and commanded to Men, which from the Divine Authority became of perpetual Obligation; whence the Paraphraſe of *Onkelos* on thoſe Portions of holy
Gen v. 22, & vi. 9. Writ, where *Enoch* and *Noah* are ſaid to have *walked with God*, expreſſes it, that they walked in the Fear of the Lord; and thus they became Righteous, becauſe they kept the Commandments, which were appointed as early as our Nature, and propagated through all Mankind: Hence the Fratricide of *Cain*, the Abominations of *Sodom*, and ſeveral other Facts mentioned in the Book of *Moſes*, were wicked, and became unlawful before the Delivery of the Written Law: And where *Abraham* is ſaid to *call upon the Name of Lord, the ever-*
Gen. xxi. 33. *laſting God*, the *Jews* ſuppoſe, that he made Proſelytes, that is, taught Strangers, and brought them to believe, and profeſs the Obſervance of theſe Precepts of Natural Law, which were obligatory from the Command of the moſt high God.

From the concurrent Teſtimony then of the whole World, Jews and Heathens, we may eaſily underſtand,

ſtand, what Obligation is, and whence its Force is derived; for all Manner of Law properly ſo called, muſt be Divine or Human: Divine, as immediately declared, ordained, and commanded by God; whether Natural, as juſt now repreſented, *i. e.* coeval with the Being of Man; or poſitive, as what were afterwards added under the ſeveral Covenants: But both are equally obligatory, that is, appointed by an expreſs Command of God. Human Law is that which has been ſuperadded by Men, ſo far as the Divine, whether natural or poſitive, permits; but the Obligation of all Law muſt be referred to the ſole Power and Authority of the great Governor of the Univerſe: For he, as the Supreme Ruler of all Things, ſhews what in itſelf is Good or Evil, and commands this to be embraced, that to be avoided; and ſo ſtrongly obliges from his own Nature and Will, that nothing can be imagined ſuperior to it: And hence is plainly ſeen the efficient Cauſe of obligatory Law, both what is called Natural, and what thereto is added in the holy Scriptures. In which Senſe and no other, natural Laws remain eternally firm and immutable: For in all theſe Caſes Reaſon can only perſuade, but has no ſuperior Power, as that of Commanding, over Men; and therefore the Riſe of all Obligation muſt be from the Authority of ſome Being ſuperior to Man; and the Law is eternal and immutable, as being the ſovereign Pleaſure and Decree of God; and it is the Law of Nature, as that is the Subject of its Government and Direction.

From the whole, we may conclude theſe modern Expreſſions, that the Law ariſes from Things themſelves; as alſo its Obligation, without the Command of any Superior; that ſuch Obligations are of eternal Neceſſity in their own Nature, antecedent to the Will and Command of God; and that Man had a Rule to conduct himſelf by, before any Declara-

Declaration of the Divine Will, *&c.* have no Foundation in Reaſon, Nature, Fitneſs, or the Poſſibility of Things; but are moſt dangerous Errors, introduced to weaken the Force of Religion, by depreciating the Uſefulneſs, Neceſſity, and Authority of Revelation.

Nothing but the Will of God can oblige; that Will cannot be known, unleſs revealed; this Revelation declares the eſſential Differences of Things, and the Conſciouſneſs of their being the Command of God, makes them become the perfect immutable Rule, Meaſure, and Law of our Acting, and ſubjects us to its Sanctions of Rewards or Puniſhments.

From the general Obſervations hitherto made, it ſeems to appear, that as human Power cannot produce more than a human Act; ſo for Reaſon to diſcover the Nature and the Will of God, is ſupernatural, a Gift above Nature, δωρεὰν ὑπὲρ φύσιν νικῶσαν τὴν φύσιν, *overcoming Nature in its preſent Degeneracy*; under which its proper Characters are Ignorance and Death, and the Dead may as eaſily ariſe and walk, as the human Mind direct itſelf to a Divine Life and to God.

For as nothing can diſpoſe a Being to act above its Condition and Nature, but the Aſſiſtance of a ſuperior Agent: So in Man, nothing can enable him to do thoſe Things, which are above his natural Capacity, but the ſupernatural Influence of God; for this is above his Natural Reaſon, or what it is able to do, *i. e.* impoſſible: Such Knowledge therefore cannot be had, but from a Cauſe on which the Mind abſolutely depends, and is able to raiſe and elevate it above its natural Condition. *Ariſtotle*, that Prince among the Heathens, and chief Advocate for Reaſon and Nature, was forced to allow all Good to be θεόδοτον, *the Gift of God*: Sacred Philoſophy confirms the ſame, *Can the*

the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye alſo do good who are accuſtomed to do evil. Nature is inſufficient to it, and whoever duly conſiders his own Impotence, muſt tremble at the Thoughts of having no other Guide to his final End, than the Light of Nature: As every Step preparatory thereto is an Advance towards Phariſaical Pride, Security, Infidelity, and Atheiſm; for *God ſitteth upon the Circle of the Earth, and the Inhabitants of the Earth are as Graſhoppers.* We bear as little Proportion to the Divine Nature and Divine Things, as thoſe Inſects do to the Knowledge and Wiſdom of Man.

Jer. xiii. 23.

Iſ. xl. 22.

CHAP. V.

God not to be defined nor demonſtrated, therefore not diſcoverable by Reaſon.

BUT to put this Argument in another Light, in order to ſhew the great Difficulty, if not utter Impoſſibility of knowing God (the Foundation of all Religion) from the Exerciſe of our natural Faculties; let us conſider it according to thoſe Rules and Proportions of Certainty, which are required in every other Part of Wiſdom; wherein we poſſeſs juſt ſo much of real Truth and Knowledge, as we comprehend the Truth and Reaſon of Things, and no more; otherwiſe we may be ſaid to know them, without comprehending any Truth or Reaſon concerning them.

For if there be any Meaning in the Word *Knowledge*, it muſt imply a Notion or Idea of the Object in the Mind; and that this Exiſtence of the Object in the Underſtanding, be agreeable to the Exiſtence

Exiſtence it has in its ſelf; elſe our Conceptions of it cannot be ſaid to be true, for true Knowledge is a Correſpondence between the Idea and the Object; and they who would argue ſcientifically on a thing, muſt have juſt Conceptions of its Cauſes and Effects, its Properties, Qualities, and Operations; without which we are ignorant of its Nature, and have only a falſe Opinion of it, and Knowledge will terminate in a Lye, or a Dream. For a Lye is nothing elſe than having no Conformity with the Truth of a thing, or Name by which it is called. And to dream, as *Plato* defines it, "Is to imagine "a thing, which is like to another, not to be like "it; or the ſame with another which is not like "it." Both which Acts are Falſhood, or not comprehending the thing as it is.

Repub. 5. p. 476.

Now, in the Language of the Schools, to comprehend an Object is to apprehend it according to every Mode and Reaſon whereby it is intelligible; thereby to define it, or give Terms and Bounds to it: For he that perfectly comprehends a thing, gives Limits and Bounds to it in its Intellect; and Terms of Definition follow Terms of Eſſence; whence the Impoſſibility of the Divine Nature's being known or defined by a created Intellect, inconteſtably follows from its Infinity and Immenſitude; and hence proceeded thoſe ſtrange and different Conceptions and Definitions of it among the wiſeſt of the Ancients; ſuch as a Mind permeating the Univerſe, Nature, Infinite Æther, Energy, Neceſſity, Elementary, with numberleſs other Imaginations; and they who ſeemed to underſtand the Divine Majeſty beſt, as *Xenophon* and others, did it by deſpairing to underſtand it all. And *Ariſto* not only rejected Logick as uſeleſs, and natural Philoſophy from not being able to conceive the Divine Nature; but on the ſame Account retrenched a great deal of Morality alſo.

For

For God is the only way to himſelf; he cannot in the leaſt be come at, defined, or demonſtrated by human Reaſon; this is only to be done by Faith; *not in the Wiſdom of Words, but by the Power and Demonſtration of the Spirit.* This Conſideration is ſo embarraſſing, that we ſee the greateſt Maintainers of Natural Law forced to take Shelter under the falſe ridiculous Cover of innate Ideas. "That if the Soul be a mere *Tabula raſa*, a naked "paſſive thing, which has no innate Furniture or "Activity of its own, nor any thing at all in it, "but what was impreſſed upon it from without; "there could be no ſuch thing as Moral Good or "Evil, Juſt or Unjuſt, nor any ſuch thing as Mo- "rality in the World." And the great Philoſopher Dr. *More*, "That God has engraven the "eternal and immutable Rules of Divine Reaſon "upon every Man's Spirit, which come in as free- "ly as the Light of the Sun into their natural "Eyes." Cudworth Morality, p. 287. P. 288. Vol. i. p. 464.

But ſurely the Soul may have Activity and Powers to receive and contemplate Truths when offered to it, though no Part of its eſſential Furniture: And it only follows, that Man could not find out his Duty and his God without Aſſiſtance; and that the Diſcovery of the Divine Being and Will is ſupernatural: But that God, according to the predeterminate Counſel of his own Will, manifeſted ſo many, and as much of his Perfections as was fitting or ſufficient to our final Good. In doing of which he has ſtooped to our Capacities, that by the Reſemblances he has made, our Underſtanding might be enabled to conceive ſome diſtant Notion of him: But would not be known ſo as to be defined, for he never yet revealed his Eſſence to any; *The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.* Therefore in deſcribing the Divine Nature, it is impoſſible to tell what he is; we muſt Athanaſ. 1 Cor. ii. 11.

be

be content to know what he is not. A Plenitude of Perfection is a Secret to us among the Depths of infinite Wiſdom, not to be penetrated into, or diſcerned by a created Being. The moſt we can apprehend is by removing every Degree of Imperfection; but attempting to declare a Nature altogether Incomprehenſible, would be a daring Folly and Wickedneſs. The Spirits round the Throne are unable to do this; they only praiſe that Glory which they cannot ſtedfaſtly behold; and ſhall Man who knows not any thing around him, nor his own Being, ſearch into, find out, or unfold the very Shadows of thoſe Attributes which the Angels cannot look upon?

Our weak imperfect Minds are loſt in the vaſt Immenſity and Redundancy of the Deity, overcome with its tranſcendent Light and dazzling Brightneſs; which therefore has to us an Appearance of Darkneſs; as the unbounded Expanſion of Light in the clear tranſparent Æther, has to us the Appearance of an azure Obſcurity; and when we have filled up our Capacity, there is ſtill an Immenſity of it left without, which can only be apprehended, by our being as it were plunged into, ſwallowed up, or loſt in it.

Of this human Imbecillity the early Heathens are a full Inſtance and Witneſs; notwithſtanding the Advantages of traditional Knowledge, they never attained more than the Shadows or Images of divine things; whatever they advanced was diſtant, broken, confuſed and dark; too thin and airy to prove a Foundation for real, ſolid, and ſubſtantial Knowledge; which *Plato* every where remarks of them, that their Contemplations and Notions of divine things fell infinitely ſhort of Truth; that they could only be ſaid, ὄναρ ἢ ὕπαρ ζῆν: To live a Sleep, or a Dream. That it was impoſſible for the Mind of ſuch to ſee and embrace the Nature of

of αὐτῦ τῦ καλῦ, of Beauty it ſelf: That they were, φιλοδόξες μᾶλλον ἢ φιλοσόφες, Lovers of Opinion rather than of Wiſdom: And that all their Shadows and Dreams concerning the τὸ ἀγαθὸν, conſiſted in Opinion, not in Knowledge; δόξῃ ἀκ ἐπιςήμῃ ἐφάπτεθαι. And when he ſeriouſly reviews his own Wiſdom, he is forced to confeſs, that τὸ καλὸν κ᾽ τὸ ἀγαθὸν, what is beautiful and good, is ἄγνωςον unknown to us, and all thoſe things which we look upon as Ideas. Therefore it is neither named, nor declared, nor conceived, nor known, nor perceived by any of thoſe things that are; and the Primitive Chriſtians copied from them, in affirming that all the Truth the Heathens ſaw was but ὀνειρώτ[illegible]ωσαν ἀλήθειαν, in a Dream.

Repub. 7. p. 534. Parmenid. p. 134.

Clem. Alex. Admon. p. 42.

Secondly, Allowing from the Infinity of Eſſence, and Diſproportion between that and a finite Capacity, that God cannot be comprehended ſo as to be defined; it being impoſſible for any Nature to comprehend what is ſupereſſential, or infinitely above it; yet that Man, by the Uſe of his Faculties, might with Certainty attain ſome Knowledge of God, or as far as he is knowable or intelligible.

To which I might anſwer, that even this would be in no Degree at all: But where would this Inquirer fix his Beginning? he is to ſearch for ſomething he knows not what; a Nature without known Properties; a Being without a Name, and ſtrictly ſpeaking incapable of one; for Names are Manifeſtations of things where many Individuals are to be diſtinguiſhed by their proper Appellations; therefore what is but one, and Incomprehenſible, can have none. We muſt be ignorant of this Eſſence, ſo need not inquire out a Name for it; though he aſſumes to himſelf ſuch as are proper for our blind corrupted State; many of which are negative ones, ἄχρονος, ἀόρατος, &c. without time, not viſible, &c. And what is purely Negative, can give

Minuc. F. §. 18. p. 95.

no

no poſitive determinate Notion or Conception; when applied to God, it is no more than Compariſon, and ſeparating him from the Creature; but what the proper Meaning of them is, when ſpoken of his Eſſence or Nature, is to us an unintelligible Term: And being ignorant of the Term, we cannot fix any Idea or Conception to it. And when *Moſes*, *Exod.* iii. 13. inquired of God his Name; the Anſwer, *I am that I am*, imports an eternal, incomprehenſible, independent Being.

But for a Man to ſeek after ſomething, which he hath neither ſeen, heard, nor hath it entered into his Heart to conceive; what he muſt know, before he looks for it, is incapable of Name or Definition, would nonplus a Philoſopher out of a State of Nature. Since whatever he came to know, he muſt be aſſured was not the thing ſought for, which to him therefore muſt appear ἀφάντας, quite unimaginable; for he muſt ſet about comprehending God, yet convinced at the ſame time, that could he comprehend him, it would not be God. For whoever imagines he knows the Divine Nature, leſſens it: And whoever does not leſſen it, can never pretend to know it.

Minuc. F. Ib.

It is impoſſible for ſuch Perſon to declare or imagine what it is he would diſcourſe of, or inquire into; a Nature he has not the leaſt Apprehenſion of; a Subject he has not the leaſt Glance of, in whole or in part, which he muſt ſeparate from all Doubt, Inconſiſtencies and Errors: He muſt demonſtrate without one known or ſure Principle to ground it upon; and draw certain neceſſary Concluſions whereon to reſt his Judgment, without the leaſt Knowledge of one Term or Propoſition to fix his Procedure on; and therefore can never know whether his Concluſion be conſequent, or not conſequent, Truth or Falſhood; which is juſt the ſame in Science, as in Architecture to raiſe a Building

ing

ing without a Foundation. Whatever the Moderns, who are ſharp-ſighted above Meaſure, can do; the Ancients, by whom we muſt judge in the Caſe before us, always taught, that we muſt know the Uſe and Meaning of Names, before we can the Things themſelves, and that by this Means is their Nature beſt inveſtigated and manifeſted. Thus *Plato* in *Cratylo*: Πρὸς τὸ ὀρθῶς διδάσκειν, δεῖ πρῶτον ἐξετάζειν τὰ ὀνόματα; in order to learn rightly, we muſt firſt accurately inquire into Names. And again, Names have the Power of teaching Things, and he who truly underſtands their Names, plainly diſcerns the Things themſelves. This is what *Diodorus* ſays in *Thucydides*, lib. 3. Οἱ λόγοι διδάσκαλοι τῶν πραγμάτων γίγνονται, Words are the Teachers of things: And to mention no more, *Plutarch de Iſide & Oſiride* delivers it as the Opinion of all Philoſophers as well as his own: Τὸς μὴ μανθάνοντας ὀρθῶς ἀκύειν ὀνομάτων, κακῶς χρῆσθαι κ᾽ τοῖς πράγμασιν. They who are not exact in underſtanding Names, will make but a bad Uſe of, or eaſily miſtake in the Things themſelves.

In other Caſes a Man is ſuppoſed to know ſome Truths, and the Meaning of a Propoſition, before he can proceed to determine any thing concerning it, becauſe till he underſtands the Terms, it is impoſſible he ſhould judge whether it be true or falſe; ſo that if a Man is ignorant of his Mark or End, he ſhoots like a blind Man at random, and in vain conſiders all things tending to the End: for without knowing the End, he cannot take Counſel by what Means to attain it; and if he attain it without Thought, or Method, or Means, ſo may a Fool or Madman as well as he; for without Conſultation there is neither Thought, nor Judgment, Invention, or Knowledge.

If the Propoſitions in a Syllogiſm are only founded on Opinion, no more will be what is inferred

from them; if they are falſe, ſo of Neceſſity muſt be the Concluſion; if they have no Relation to the Subject, it can receive no Light from them. And it is impoſſible for one ignorant of the whole Queſtion propounded, to come at any Part of the Truth. In all Inquiries there muſt be ſomething known, of it ſelf credible, and to be believed without Demonſtration, from whence we muſt proceed to the Inveſtigation of other Truths, this being the Foundation and Criterion of thoſe things which ſeem to be found out: For every Queſtion is found out from ſome Knowledge we are in Poſſeſſion of, which muſt ſubſiſt before that which is ſought after. In ſome Caſes we inquire into the Eſſence of a thing from its known Properties and Operations; in others, from their ſenſible Effects only; but where the Eſſence, Affections, Properties, and Operations are abſolutely unknown, and no apparent Relation or Dependence of an Effect upon the Cauſe, there is no Poſſibility of finding it out; or if we could, yet cannot know it when found. And if there be the leaſt Confuſion in the Terms, there muſt be a Fallacy through the whole Procedure; and what we conclude, may be ſomething, or nothing, or any thing, as well as the thing ſought for.

Were we to convert an *Indian*, and lay before him this Propoſition, *There is a God*; we ſhould firſt endeavour to make him underſtand what is meant by God, what kind of Being is called by that Name, and as far as lay in our Power deſcribe the Perfections of his Nature, before we could reaſonably expect him to believe there is ſuch a Being; for a bare Name conveys no Idea with it. And for any one to go about perſuading Men to believe the Exiſtence of a God, without firſt acquainting them with the Nature and Attributes of ſuch a Being, is an Endeavour to perſuade Men to believe they know not what, and to aſſent to

ſome-

ſomething as an undoubted Truth, which they underſtand nothing of.

This is the very Caſe of every Perſon in a State of Nature; before he can know there is a God, he muſt underſtand what is meant by a Supreme Being, and wherein his Perfections conſiſt, ſo as to diſtinguiſh him from others; that he is Eternal, Omniſcient, Omnipotent, *&c.* otherwiſe ſomething may exiſt, but he knows not what: He is ignorant of the Term, and the Propoſition may be true or falſe; we muſt apprehend the Nature of a Thing before we can be aſſured it exiſts, becauſe it is the Nature which ſpecifically diſtinguiſhes the Thing. As no Man therefore can know more of the Divine Nature than he is pleaſed to reveal, no Man by the Strength of Reaſon can diſcover his neceſſary Exiſtence, becauſe any thing may be ſaid to exiſt as well as God, if we know nothing of his Nature or Perfections.

We need not Scruple then to ſay, that thoſe Philoſophers who named God, knew him not, nor what they philoſophized about, when they ſpake ſo many Falſhoods, and ſo little Truth concerning him, and aſcribed Properties to him utterly inconſiſtent with his Nature: Eſtabliſh the one, and you deſtroy the other; they are Extremes never to be reconciled, nor brought together; a Name and Exiſtence they had by rote, but not the Meaning of either; in theſe their Conceptions and Imaginations were merely viſionary. They judged of the Gods by themſelves, attributed to them the ſame Paſſions and Affections, Shapes, Infirmities, and Wants, and never could ſeparate the one from the other; they had the Name, but not the Thing. Birds may be taught to imitate the Words of Men, but have no Notion or Apprehenſion of what they ſay. And when *Homer* ſaid, Πατηρ ἀνδρῶν τε Θεῶν τε, *He neither knew who the Father was, nor in what manner he*

Clem. Alex. Adm. p. 49.

he is ſo: And all who attempt this Subject without the Divine Aſſiſtance, are like thoſe who would endeavour to walk without Feet.

That *Pythagoras* perceived his own Ignorance of the Divine Nature, and the Impoſſibility of forming a correct Notion of it, appears from that *famous Axiom* in his School, "To disbelieve no-"thing that was wonderful concerning the Gods, "nor even concerning Divine Things;" which opened a Door for the Belief of every corrupt Tradition, however monſtrous or inconſiſtent, according as their Vanity or Credulity prevailed: If it was but wonderful and ſtruck their Imagination, the Rule was, "Apply it directly to the Divine "Nature, however irreconcilable with it."

So *Pherecydes* who was the firſt among the *Greeks* (as *Laertius* out of *Theopompus* ſays) who wrote περὶ φύσεως καὶ Θεῶν, *of Nature and the Gods*, in his Letter when dying to *Thales*, wherein he acquaints him, "That he had ordered his Writings to be "carried to him, and that if they pleaſed him and "the other wiſe Men, they might publiſh, if not, "ſuppreſs them:" He adds this melancholy Account of human Abilities; "They contain nothing "certain, or that gives me Satisfaction; ſo that I "profeſs not to know the Truth, nor to have at-"tained to it: I ſtart many things which I cannot "diſcover." So *Ptolemy* the famous Mathematician, left off the Study of Divinity and Phyſicks; the former becauſe human Weakneſs could no way diſcover or come at the Knowledge of it from the excellent Nature of its Objects: The other, becauſe it could not be apprehended or retained, from the Inconſtancy and perpetual Change in Matter.

Cœl. Rhodig. l. 14. c. 19.

The *Greeks* took great pains to improve their almoſt loſt κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, or *imperfect Notices of original Revelation*, by importing a new Stock of Principles and Traditions, in order to make a new

Edition

Edition of Natural Theology; but were ſo far from attaining their End, that all their Attempts and Studies to this Purpoſe, ſerved only the more effectually to entangle them in groſs Ignorance, Superſtition, Idolatry, and Atheiſm. When Divinity was loſt, and Philoſophy undertook to reſtore it; the higheſt Part of Wiſdom it aimed at, was to inſtitute ſome kind of Religion, and appoint ſome proper Ceremonies for the Worſhip of the Gods: With this View *Pythagoras* ranſacked *Egypt* and the Eaſt; yet after all his Labours, the whole of his Philoſophy was an Heap of idolatrous Superſtition, altho' it retained ſome obſcure Images and Characters of Truth. The Event anſwered not the Greatneſs of the Attempt; nay Natural Theology was by theſe Undertakings corrupted rather than improved; for he introduced the Doctrine of Demons, and many other Extravagancies never heard of before amongſt them.

Few or none underſtood their own Philoſophical Notions concerning God and Divine Things, neither rightly conceiving nor underſtanding the Things on which they diſcourſed: As *Plato* ingenuouſly confeſſes, that he had received many Myſteries from the Ancients which he underſtood not, but expected ſome Interpreter to explain them to him: And they who underſtand not a Subject, will wreſt and deprave Expreſſions to other Senſes than they were originally intended; even *Serranus* can allow, that *Plato* might ſpeak many Things which he took out of the *Phœnician* Doctrine, but underſtood not; no more did the *Phœnicians*, from whom he borrowed them; and therefore could not but be unintelligible, as *Plato* calls them, ἀπόῤῥητοι, *ineffable Notions*, ἀποῤῥήτων μύθων, *&c.*

This was the Caſe of them all; they had ſome general Names and Ideas, looſe, broken Notices of the Things they diſcourſed of; but had not any par-

ticular Apprehenſion of the Parts, Qualities, Cauſes, Influences and Effects of Things; they had only ſome general Rumours or traditional Notions of God, his Divine Perfections, Operations, and Effects of Providence, the Origin of the Univerſe, the State of Innocence, the Fall of Man, *&c.* And therefore both their Notions and Reaſonings of them were confuſed and imperfect, nothing evident, diſtinct or clear, either of the firſt Cauſe or its Connexion with the Effects produced by it; and conſequently the Knowledge was opinionative, without a ſteadfaſt certain Perſuaſion of the Truth of them.

They had no ſubſtantial, real, intuitive Contemplation of thoſe things about which they philoſophized; they could obtain no more than ſome artificial Pictures, or rather Shadows only of the firſt Principles, of God, Nature, and other Myſteries, which were conveyed to them by ſome broken, oriental *Jewiſh* Traditions; but theſe were only Phantaſms, no real ſolid Notices or Ideas of the Divine Things they related to; and were no more than an equivocal, artificial Contemplation, as much differing from true Knowledge and its Object, as the View of the Sun in a Picture differs from that in the Firmament.

Thirdly, There are but two Ways of knowing the firſt Cauſe, either from its Effects, or its Manifeſtations. In Phyſicks, there is a double Procedure, from a known Cauſe to the Conſideration of its Effects; which cannot be in the Caſe before us, the Cauſe being ſuppoſed utterly unknown; or from viſible effects, to enquire into their inviſible Cauſes, in which alſo our utmoſt Knowledge is ſlow and uncertain: All the Truths of Nature are found bigger than our Minds; ſo that we can have no perfect Apprehenſion, no Idea or Conception of the Nature of any Subſtance; for the loweſt Subſtances have many puzzling Difficulties and Entanglements

in

in the Speculation of them; ſomething in their Eſſence that is incomprehenſible: But that Philoſophy which is divine, is vaſtly different, it contemplates the inviſible Natures of inviſible Subſtances, which are infinitely removed from us, what we can neither underſtand nor conceive; and in which there can be no regular Procedure for an uninformed Mind, in aſcending from viſible material Effects to the Knowledge of immaterial Perfections and Truths.

There is no Scale or Ladder of Entity and Perfection one above another, no Order of rational and intellectual Beings to lead him ſtep by ſtep to the unmade intellectual Creator: This proved the firſt Stumbling-block to the Ancients, that they could not conceive an Incorporeity, any thing entirely void of Matter, much leſs an immaterial Maker of it; no Heathen in the World believed God the Creator of Matter; and the Reaſon of this muſt be, becauſe there is no Connexion, no Order, or Method of aſcending by any Scale to the Contemplation of ſpiritual Objects, to the Demonſtration and Knowledge of an immaterial Subſtance and inviſible Cauſe; for if the Ancients did not do it, it is only to ſay in other Words, that Nature never could do it.

Fourthly, If it be ſaid, that from the contemplating Things viſible and intelligible; we may by Analogy proceed to the Diſcovery of unknown Inviſibles; and the Mind from a Knowledge of the Creature, raiſe itſelf to an Apprehenſion of the Creator: Firſt it will be granted, that the more abſtracted Things are from Matter, and remote from Senſe, the more difficult they muſt be to be underſtood; the more pure and ſpiritual they are, the leſs Proportion they bear to our Underſtanding, and therefore the leſs knowable; for all Knowledge ſuppoſes

ſome Proportion betwixt the Faculty and the Object, in order to the Reception of its Idea or Image; but the Diſproportion betwixt our natural Apprehenſions and the divine Perfection is infinite; and that Capacity which is too ſmall for the embracing human Things, can by no Length of Experience be able to riſe to the vaſt Extent of Immenſe and Eternal ones: But if ſome things are difficult, others more ſo, ſome moſt ſo; it will follow, that what is at the wideſt Diſtance of Infinity, as God is, cannot (except our Minds are commenſurate to all Truth) be diſcernible or intelligible.

When we make Inferences and Compariſons from things, between which, by ſome Similitude, there ſeems to be a Relation; yet we muſt be thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of one Thing at leaſt, before we can judge that any other reſembles it: Which of the Works of God then do we ſo far comprehend, as to ground any Proportion, Compariſon, or Likeneſs with God? Not a Duſt on the Earth, a Drop of the Sea, or an Atom in the Air, but we are ignorant of its Cauſe, Frame, or Production; and what can we infer or conclude from an Eſſence unknown to one infinitely more ſo, nay utterly incomprehenſible?

Or if we had an exacter Knowledge of Nature, than has been yet attained, we could not, by any Rule or Gradations of Analogy, find any Likeneſſes to conduct our Thoughts to a Contemplation, Notion, or Idea of God, becauſe both they and we are finite, and there is no Proportion betwixt that and Infinity: There is nothing like God, *in the Heavens above or in the Earth beneath*, from which we could infer his Being or Nature; there being nothing to which we can compare him, to form the leaſt Idea or Reſemblance of him.

In Natural Things there is no Intercourſe of Action and Paſſion, unleſs they have ſome Proportion

tion each to other; or unleſs they communicate in ſome common Matter. But no ſuch Intercourſe between Material and Immaterial, Temporal and Eternal, can occur to an uninſtructed Mind; there is no common Subject wherein he can unite and bring them together; it is againſt, *i. e.* above the Law of his Being, and therefore a Contradiction: Where there is no Proportion between Ideas, there can be no Tranſition, or Connexion; and of Subjects whereof there is no Reſemblance, we cannot think or ſpeak further than they are declared to us.

A Mind that has no Knowledge but of Senſibles, ſees or hears no other Objects, can abſtract no Ideas from Matter, but what are material; and had he Mountains of them, his Attempt would be as fruitleſs as the Giants invading *Jupiter*; heap Matter upon Matter, it will never amount to Immateriality, nor open to his View the new Scene of Inſenſibles and Inviſibles; without an Inſtructor to open his Eyes, it would not be poſſible to conceive an angelick Being, becauſe it can have no Reſemblance, no Idea of a Subſtance purely ſpiritual; yet vaſtly remoter from Matter, is an omnipotent Being, comprehending in itſelf all the Poſſibilities of Things.

If ſuch a Mind could diſcover any Truth, the firſt it met with would be its own Weakneſs and Narrowneſs of Comprehenſion; of which if it were not immediately convinced, it could not diſcover any thing elſe; no Object of Science being ſo evident to the Mind, as its own Short-ſightedneſs and Ignorance, which would immediately damp any further Enquiry (one would think) after Infinity and Immateriality.

And nothing can be more viſionary or falſe, both in Nature and Experience, than thoſe Operations, and Sallies from Earth to Heaven, which ſome learned Men, in favour of an Hypotheſis, attribute to the Mind: That the Intellect doth not reſt here, but upon occaſion of theſe corporeal things thus com-

Cudworth's Moral. l. 4. c. 2. p. 176.

comprehended, naturally riſes higher to the framing and exciting of certain Ideas from within itſelf, of other things not exiſting in thoſe ſenſible Objects, but abſolutely incorporeal: For being raviſhed with the Contemplation of this admirable Mechaniſm, and artificial Contrivance of the material Univerſe, forthwith it naturally conceives it to be nothing elſe but the paſſive Stamp, Print, and Signature of ſome living Art and Wiſdom, as the Pattern, Archetype, and Seal of it; and ſo excites from within itſelf an Idea of the divine Art and Wiſdom. Nay conſidering further, how all things in this great mundane Machine are contrived, not only for the Beauty of the Whole, but alſo for the Good of every Part in it, that is endued with Life and Senſe, it exerts another Idea, *viz.* of Goodneſs and Benignity from within itſelf; and from hence preſently makes up an Idea of God, a Mind infinitely good and wiſe; and ſo as it were reſounds and re-echoes back the great Creator's Name, which, from thoſe viſible Characters impreſſed upon the material Univerſe, had pierced loudly into its Ears, but in ſuch an indiſcernible manner, that Senſe liſtning never ſo attentively, could not perceive the leaſt Murmur or Whiſper of it. And this is the moſt natural Scale, by which the Intellectual Mind, in the Contemplation of Corporeal things, aſcends to God.

No! the Whole is perfectly unnatural, without Example or Foundation in Nature. Innate Ideas are Non-entities, and corporeal Objects cannot convey or ſtir up incorporeal Notions. There is no Archetype but the Mind Eternal, and no Scale betwixt that and a Creature, but the Manifeſtation of its own Light. Supernatural Knowledge cannot be from Nature, but Inſtruction; and the Original Inſtructor, God, the Archetypal Intellect, and the only poſſible Teacher of things belonging to himſelf.

For

For as no Ideas (or the Pictures and Repreſentations in the Mind of the Things, for which they are ſubſtituted) can reach the Underſtanding, but through the Senſes; the Deaf-born have no Ideas of Sounds, nor the Blind of Light, nor the Natural Intellect of Divine things, becauſe the firſt Inlets are ſhut up, by which alone they could have reached the Imagination; but they may be, and are conveyed by the Inlet of Language and Inſtruction, which is alſo through the Uſe and Mediation of the Senſes; and yet no Advantage given to the Atheiſtical Cauſe. Some have indeed affirmed, that we can have no Idea or Notion, Conception, or Thought of any thing, not ſubject to Senſe: Whence the Atheiſts inferred, that we cannot have the leaſt Evidence of any thing but from the ſame; therefore there being no corporeal Senſe of a Deity, there can be no Evidence at all of his Exiſtence, ſince Senſe is to be the Criterion of Truth.

But this Objection is here totally removed; Senſible and Inſenſible are wholly diſſimilar, nor can the Nature of one inſtruct us in the other; but as the Eyes of the Blind may be opened to ſee, and the Ears of the Deaf to hear; ſo may the Mind, by ſupernatural Inſtruction, be enabled to conceive and diſcern thoſe Truths which are not the Objects of Senſe or Nature, and which it never could have received, if a ſuperior Wiſdom and Power had not acquainted it with them. Which is no more than what the laſt mentioned Author in another Paſſage obſerves: "That our Underſtandings are many times ignorant, doubting, erring, and ſlowly proceed by "Diſcourſe and Ratiocination from one thing to "another. They are but potentially all things, as "*Ariſtotle* tells us, *&c.*" What actually furniſhes the Capacity then, but Inſtruction, gives it a new Stock of Materials, and directs it to the Contemplation of what before was unperceived and indiſ- P. 255.

coverable,

coverable, and makes that Knowledge actual, which before was only potential?

Such is every Natural Man and Savage (and all Minds without Culture are the ſame) they could neither hear the Whiſper nor the Thunder of the Works of God, ſpeaking either his Name or Being. Theſe Notions proceed from no innate Ideas or Abſtractions from Matter, or any Self-reflexions, or internal Operations. The Effect can never exceed its Cauſe, nor Reaſon diſcover ſupernatural Objects, without a Communication of them from the Fountain of Wiſdom and Knowledge.

The only Method of Ratiocination then left him to come at theſe Subjects, muſt be the Rule of Contraries: That as whatever is cognizable by him, is groſs and material; therefore he muſt conclude (what his Senſes or Imagination could never admit) that there is a Subſtance without any conceivable Parts, Extenſion, or Solidity, neither viſible nor tangible, incorporeal, remote from Matter, a pure Spirit, which he can have no ſenſible Perception or abſtracted Notion of. The acuteſt Philoſopher never had; every Creature he obſerves, is periſhable, dies, corrupts, and revives no more; therefore there is an uncreated, neceſſary, ſelf-exiſting Being, without Beginning or End, Incorruptible, Infinite, Eternal; and that ſome Part of himſelf (which he has no Knowledge of) ſhall die and riſe again, and be immortal. From whatever Properties he does, or can know, he muſt infer ſomething oppoſite to it, undiſcoverable by, and contradictory to the Teſtimony of his Senſes, and what therefore he cannot poſſibly believe. Nor in all this does he underſtand one Term or Syllable, and can therefore never methodize his Thoughts, ſo as to draw a Concluſion from them, or even a Perſuaſion.

This is all the firſt Planters of the World could do, who, after a few Deſcents, retained nothing but the Name

Name of their Forefathers God and Religion, and had no Teachers but the Courſe of the Rivers, the Flowing of the Sea, the Painting of the Fields, and the Motions of the Heavenly Bodies. The Diſquiſitions of *Zophar* would be ſuitable to them: *Can I by ſearching find out God? Can I find out the Almighty to Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what can I do? deeper than Hell, what can I know? the Meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth; and broader than the Sea.* Theſe are the nobleſt Works of God, yet inſufficient to acquaint us with their Author. Job xi. 7, &c.

In other Sciences, ſuch as Logick, Geometry, *&c.* their Foundation, or Knowledge of what Relations things bear to each other, is by their Agreement with ſome Third Being or Propoſition, to which their Relations are mutual and equal: But here there is no Medium, whereunto we can compare the Divine Nature; and to imagine uncultured Reaſon could wade through the vaſt Abyſs to unknown Regions, and proceed with Certainty to the Apprehenſion of it, is no more than Enthuſiaſm and Chimera; a Power which God and Nature have denied to it. There are Limits given to every created Being, and Bounds ſet which it cannot paſs, beyond which all things are dark and impenetrable. This is the Condition of Man; he has Faculties to receive what God vouchſafes to reveal of himſelf: This is the Limit of Human Underſtanding, it can add nothing thereto. To receive larger Emanations, is the Privilege of the Bleſſed: To know all of himſelf, the incommunicable Prerogative of God.

All this is fully eſtabliſhed from the Poets and Philoſophers of old, who knew the Name of God; but being ignorant of what he had revealed, and adventuring to ſpeak of the Divine Nature, uttered ſuch extravagant Abſurdities concerning it. Tho' many things are ſpoken worthily, yet there are more ſo repugnant, falſe, and injurious, as render their ſublimeſt

meſt Philoſophy a rude and ſtrangely incorrect Draught of the Divinity.

Yet this muſt always be remember'd to their Honour, that let their Attainments be what they would, they never aſcribed them to their own Reaſon or Sagacity, but always lament the Darkneſs of theſe Subjects, the Weakneſs of the human Mind, the little Satisfaction they met with in their moſt diligent Searches, the Want of a better Guide; and conſtantly acknowledged, that whatever great or good thing any Man does, was owing to the Aſſiſtance of the Gods. For which reaſon, *Homer* and the Poets gave to all their Heroes a God for their Companion in Danger, and held that no Man ever was conſiderable without their Help and Inſpiration.

Cic. Nat. D. l. 2. n. 66.

Plato wiſhed for a Prophet to reveal the Will of God to us, without which we cannot know it. And *Socrates*, in his *Cratylus*, "That good Men only are "wiſe;" and is every where full of this Doctrine, "That all true Knowledge of the Gods is from the "Gods; and that the Mind of Man ſtands in need "of Divine Illumination to underſtand Divine "things, as much as the Eye wants the Light of "the Sun, to ſee viſible things." And *Plotinus*, after him, makes God to be Eſſential Wiſdom, from whom all the Rays of Created Wiſdom ſtream as Beams from the Sun. Both *Plato* and *Cicero* ſay, "That Philoſophy is the Invention and Gift of the "Gods, not Men: That it was this firſt inſtructed us "in the Worſhip of them, in all Social Virtues, and "Greatneſs of Soul: That this diſpelled Darkneſs "from the Mind, by which means we diſcern what "is above us and below us: That God is the Beginning, Middle, and End of things." Thus plainly attributing whatever they knew of the Gods, or Divine things, to no Principle, but the Gods: And *Plutarch* ſays the ſame: "That the Knowledge of "the

Epinom. p. 986.

Rep. 6. 483.

En. 5. l. 8. c. 5. p. 546

Tuſc. Q. l. 1. n. 26.

If. & Oſir. Init.

" the Gods can only be had from them." And it was ſometime a ſettled Maxim in the *Socratick* School, " That even Virtue is not from Nature or Diſcipline, " but θεία μοίρᾳ, *by ſome Divine Infuſion*, and even " without the Concurrence of the Mind." Meno, p. 99.

But how difficult and embarraſſing a Subject the wiſeſt of them thought the Contemplation of Divine things, appears from their own Confeſſions. Thus *Pythagoras* affirmed, " That God was Darkneſs, un- " known, impenetrable Obſcurity." And it ſeems to have been a primeval Tradition, if the Sentiment of *Mercurius Triſmegiſtus*, to whom it is aſcribed, Θεὸν μὲν νοῆσαι χαλεπὸν, φράσαι δὲ ἀδύνατον· τὸ γὰρ ἀσώματον σώματι σημῆναι ἀδύνατον; *it is difficult to conceive God, to declare him impoſſible; it not being poſſible to ſet forth what is incorporeal by that which is corporeal.* Stobæus Tit. 78. de Diis.

Plato probably copied him, when, after all his painful Searches, he complains, " That it is diffi- " cult to find out the Parent and Maker of the " Univerſe, and when found, ſcarce lawful or poſſi- " ble to declare him to the Vulgar." On which *Origen* makes this Comment, " That *Plato*, by ſay- " ing it was difficult, argued the Impoſſibility of " Human Reaſon finding out God according to the " Dignity of his Nature; but if not in ſuch a De- " gree, yet that he might in a good Meaſure be " known, and more than he is by moſt Men." In Timæo. Cont. Celſ. l. 7. p. 360.

Which had it been true, that he or any other had found out God, they would not have worſhipped, or adored, or called any thing God beſides him; and neither added nor diminiſhed any thing that could eſſentially appertain to ſuch a Being. But we affirm, that Human Nature is not able to find out God in any degree; nor can he be truly found by any, unaſſiſted by him who is ſearched after; but is diſcovered by them who humbly confeſs, that beſides their own Endeavours they ſtand in need of his Aſſiſtance, manifeſting

feſting himſelf to ſuch, as far as the Nature of God can be declared to Man, or the Soul of Man, whilſt in the Body, can know of God.

Diogenes Laertius reckoned *Plato* among the Scepticks, for ſaying, τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς θεοῖς καὶ θεῶν παισὶν ἐγχωρεῖν, τὸν δὲ εἰκότα λόγον ζητεῖν; *That he left Truth to the Gods, and the Sons of the Gods, but for his own part he only ſearched after what was probable.* In Pyrrhone, l. 9. n. 72.

Certain it is, that he every where ſpeaks with the utmoſt Diffidence, and even Deſpair, of ever attaining the Knowledge of Divine things. "That undoubtedly there are many intricate and perplexing Difficulties in this Enquiry, after the Knowledge and Idea of the greateſt Good: That the Soul doubts, and is at a ſtand, and not able to apprehend ſufficiently what it is; or attain therein that Aſſurance which it does in other things; and this makes it err from the Truth, in endeavouring to find one in the ſame manner that it does the other: That Opinion without Knowledge is deſpicable, and the beſt Opinions are but blind (or Gueſs-work) nor is there any Difference between thoſe who happen to gueſs right at Truth, without knowing it, or the Blind who find the Way by Chance. The Knowledge of the greateſt Good ſeems to be placed beyond the Reach of human Diſcovery; and I am afraid, whilſt I endeavour it, of being baffled in the Attempt, and expoſing my Weakneſs; for believe me, the Majeſty thereof ſeems to ſurpaſs the Limits of human Underſtanding. It appears therefore propereſt to conſider the Offspring, and the greateſt Likeneſs of that Good, that we may thereby approach the nearer to his Nature, and afterwards unfold the Hiſtory of the Father; and I wiſh myſelf able to explain, and you to apprehend it." Repub. 6. p. 505. p. 506.

And in explaining this Doctrine, he ſays, "That things themſelves are comprehended by the Senſes, p. 507.

"but

" but their Ideas by the Underſtanding: That the " Sun is neither the Eye nor the Light, but the " Cauſe of it; and what Light is to the Eye, that is " Truth to the Mind; the Eye cannot ſee without " the one, nor the Mind underſtand without the other: " So the Idea of Good is the Cauſe of Truth and " Wiſdom. They are excellent things, and like it, p. 508. " but not the thing itſelf. Light and Sight ap- p. 509. " proach nearer than other created Beings to the " Nature of the Sun, yet are not the Sun; ſo Know- " ledge and Truth have a Reſemblance of the Su- " preme Good, yet neither of them is it. As the " Sun is not only the Cauſe that things are ſeen, but " alſo of their Generation, Growth, and Nutrition, " but not the Generation itſelf: So the Supreme " Good is the Cauſe not only that things are known, " but alſo of their Eſſence and Exiſtence, yet not that " Eſſence, *&c.*" And to ſhew how little known or believed in the World Divine things were, he introduces *Glaucus* raiſing a loud Laughter at all thoſe ſublime Doctrines he had been delivering.

But the Philoſopher here plainly diſtinguiſhes three things, the Faculty of Sight, the Object to be ſeen, and the Light to diſcern it by: So in Divine things, Reaſon is the Faculty, God the Object; but Illumination from himſelf the only Light to enable the Mind to diſcern him. There is an inward Eye of the Mind, which is contemplative Reaſon: The Underſtanding of the Soul is the Light of this Eye, but divine Communication the Sun of this Light, and God is the Fountain and Father of all ſpiritual Light.

And to ſhew that all the Attainments of Philoſophy in theſe deep Studies of the firſt Principle, the Nature of God, and the Myſteries of Divine Knowledge, had nothing real or ſolid in them, but were mere Phantoms and Imaginations without any Propriety; empty Notions and Shadows of the things they related to: He feigned a ſubterraneous Dwelling or Cavern, the Entrance of which lies open at a Repub. 7. p. 514.

great diſtance, in which there are Men from their Childhood tied Neck and Heels together, lying upon the Ground, and not being able to turn their Heads, can ſee nothing but what is before them. He then would place a Fire artificially, betwixt which and the Perſons bound, Men might walk carrying Statues, Veſſels, and other things, the Shadows of which would fall upon the oppoſite Side of the Den. They will undoubtedly, ſays he, think theſe Shadows to be the very real things themſelves, and the Words they hear to be the Words of theſe Shadows. Such is the State of theſe Men lying bound in darkneſs. The Den is this World, wherein Men lie proſtrate on the Ground bound with Chains of native Ignorance; ſo that we cannot turn our Heads about to contemplate the true Light τῦ ὄντος, *of Being*; but can only ſee the Shadows of things, which yet we gueſs are the things themſelves, *&c.* It is not poſſible to repreſent more emphatically the Blindneſs and Ignorance of Human Nature, and the Impoſſibility for Reaſon to diſcern Divine Truths, or have the leaſt real intuitive Apprehenſion of them; for τὸ τῆ
P. 533. ψυχῆς ὄμμα κατωρυγμένον ἐϛὶ ἐν βαρβαρικῷ ἀγνοίας βορβόρῳ, *the Eye of the Soul is quite immerſt in the bar-*
P. 516. *barous Mire and Filth of Ignorance.* But that if afterwards theſe Perſons were brought into the Light, firſt beholding the Reflexion of things, and then the real Subſtances, in Heaven and Earth, the Moon and Stars, but principally the Sun, as it were directing all things in this viſible World; they would immediately conclude that the Sun was the Author of Times and Seaſons, governed all things, and was the Cauſe of whatever they beheld.

So that in *Plato*'s Opinion, the moſt glorious Works of Nature would not lead Men to the Knowledge of God, but rather ſtop their Minds, to conſider the Sun, *&c.* as the firſt Cauſe, which had been the real Fact in all Ages, till they had a ſtronger Light than that of the Heavens to direct them to the Author of them.

This

This he had learned from his Maſter *Socrates*, who always confeſſed he knew nothing of theſe high Points, and would not therefore venture to affirm any thing: And his not being able to determine wherein the final Good of Man conſiſted, cauſed that Diviſion in his School, which afterwards rent it into ſo many Sects and Parties.

We have a great Example of Modeſty and Judgment in the Caſe before us from *Simonides*: *Hiero* Tyrant of *Sicily* asked him what God was? The Philoſopher, a learned and wiſe Man in *Cicero*'s Opinion, anſwered, that it was not a Queſtion which could be immediately reſolved, and demanded a Day to conſider of it. *Hiero* then deſired an Anſwer, but *Simonides* asked two Days more to think of it; and as often as called upon, required double the time to give in his Anſwer. At which *Hiero* wondering, asked the Reaſon of ſuch Delays: *Becauſe*, ſays he, *the longer I conſider it, the more obſcure it appears to me.* *Cicero*'s Remark upon this, is, *That neither could he produce any thing better; for in all things, but eſpecially thoſe of Nature*, maximè in phyſicis, *it is eaſier to declare what is not, than what is.* And I believe, *Simonides* finding many ſubtile and curious Notions crowding upon his Mind, and doubting which of them was right, deſpaired of finding out the Truth. Nat. D. l. 1. n. 22.

Such were *Cicero*'s Thoughts of the Arduouſneſs of this Task; and in other Places he copies his admired *Plato*. "That it is difficult to find out the Author of "the Univerſe, or if found, impious to promulge him: "That when we ſpeak of the Nature of the Gods, or "the Creation of the World; if we cannot diſtinctly "apprehend things, ſo that what we ſay ſhould be clear "or conſiſtent, it is no wonder, we muſt be content "with what is probable, remembring that we are but "Men, and of ſuch nothing more than Probability is "required." And adds, "That if we can gueſs right "at any Truth, we cannot have the leaſt doubt in "believing, that this World is a living Animal, en-"dued with Underſtanding, *&c.*" Timæus.

This wiſeſt of Heathens apprehended no Clearneſs or Evidence from Reaſon or Nature in theſe Subjects; no Intellectual Chain to raiſe the Mind; for they could not make their Arguments, that were to prove them, conſiſtent. All Knowledge herein was but Gueſs: And what he imagines to be the moſt evident Truth, was a foul idolatrous Error.

Nat. D. l. 3. n. 3. In the Perſon of *Cotta* he gives the Opinion of moſt Men. He believed the Gods on the Authority of his Forefathers, but could perceive no Strength of Argument to convince him of the Certainty thereof. All that Philoſophy had invented, was produced; but Debate darkned the Cauſe, and the many Arguments urged by *Balbus*, made him doubt of Points, which before he had never queſtioned.

Ibid. n. 4.

Such was the Language and Complaint of all the Philoſophers, from a plain Diſcernment of their Inability to attain ſupernatural and divine Truths; which cannot more fully be illuſtrated, than from the thorow Ignorance of their own Condition. Such Queſtions as theſe were the eternal Subject of Debate, but never ſettled. What or whence is Man? to what Purpoſes was he made? by whoſe Wiſdom created? what is his Buſineſs upon Earth? or to what End does he undergo ſo many Trials and Afflictions? did he receive Life from the natural Moiſture of the Earth, as Mice or Worms? or did he receive his Speech and Form from the Hands of ſome Contriver or Maker?

Arnob. p. 27.

I need not mention here any of the learned primitive Chriſtians, who are unanimous in this Opinion, that the human Intellect cannot apprehend divine and ſupernatural Truths, without the Aſſiſtance of a ſtronger Light than that of Nature or Reaſon.

How is all this conſiſtent with the preſent Maxims in Theology? That there is no Man whatſoever, who makes any Uſe of his Reaſon, but may eaſily become more certain of the Exiſtence of God, than he can of any thing beſides his own Exiſtence. And

Dr Clarke Diſc. 1. p. 20.

Mr.

Mr. *Locke* tells us, "That it is the moſt obvious "Truth which Reaſon diſcovers, and its Evidence "equal to mathematical Certainty." To an inſtructed Mind it is, but to an uninſtructed one nothing, as we have ſeen, more dark and uncertain; as their own Words confeſs alſo, and which deſtroy the very Suppoſition. "That this requires Thought and At- "tention, and the Mind muſt apply itſelf to a regu- "lar Deduction of it, from ſome Part of our intui- "tive Knowledge; or elſe we ſhall be as uncertain "of this, as of other Propoſitions, which are in them- "ſelves capable of clear Demonſtration." That is, they muſt do what no Man ever did, nor is poſſible for Perſons under thoſe Circumſtances to perform. P. 33, 373. Locke, Ib.

Which among the Nations of the Earth diſcharged this eaſy Task? When did the *Scythian* or the *Briton* ſo attentively apply themſelves to ſo regular Deductions from Intuitive Knowledge, as to diſcover a Deity, and form the Rules of Virtue from the eternal Reaſon of things, into a rational well-connected Syſtem? If they did not, it is all Parade and Boaſt of Words; if they did, let the Reaſoners and their Arguments be produced to convince Gainſayers, and all who ſo impiouſly derogate from the all-ſufficient Power of Nature and Reaſon, as to affirm they have not Abilities even to enter upon the Subject; and are ſo incredulous as not to believe thoſe Perſons, who cannot account for one common Occurrence in Nature, can clearly unfold ſuch things as lie moſt remote from their Knowledge and Enquiry. This is a Miracle that ought to be explained by thoſe who hold the affirmative Side of the Queſtion; the Proofs of a Negative being only circumſtantial, in reducing the contrary Opinion to Abſurdity or Impoſſibility; and which, I hope, is not altogether wanting in the Point under Conſideration.

In Confirmation of this, I ſhall offer one other Argument, *viz.* That the Mind cannot have the ſame Evidence in Divine things, that it has of Truth in

ſome other Sciences. And on this account, many of the Ancients either judged them uncertain, or rejected them, or took them wholly upon Truſt, without enquiring what Degrees of Certainty they were capable of.

That all things will not admit of the ſame full Demonſtration, we have the Teſtimony of *Ariſtotle*, who relied as much on Reaſon, and as little on Faith, as any Modern. His Words are: "We muſt remember that we are not to ſeek for the ſame Exactneſs in all things; but in every thing content ourſelves with ſuch a Method as the Subject will bear; neither muſt we in all things ſearch after the Cauſe in the ſame manner; in ſome it may be ſufficient to demonſtrate that the thing is ſo, as in firſt Principles."

Ethic. l. 1. c. 7.

And this is neceſſary in Divine things on ſeveral Accounts.

Firſt, From the Will of God, who has propounded them to us only as Matters of Faith, or a ſubmitting of Reaſon to what he declares concerning them, without being able to penetrate or comprehend them, which kind of Knowledge is reſerved for a more perfect State.

Secondly, From the Nature of the Things exhibited to us, which are not ſubject to the ſame Inveſtigation, as thoſe which are more ſenſible and obvious. We cannot define them ſo as to limit their Natures in our Underſtanding, or remove all Obſcurity in our Apprehenſions of them; as we do not fully comprehend the Terms, ſo neither can we the Propoſition which conſiſts of them; we do not clearly diſcern their Cauſes or Dependences, therefore cannot form any Geometrical Method, to direct us in the Diſquiſition of their Truth.

Thirdly, We cannot (as has been ſhewn) trace the Cauſe from the Effects by reaſon of the vaſt and inconceivable Diſtance between Finite and Infinite, Crea-

Creation and Creator, which nothing but Omnipotence could unite.

Fourthly, There can be no Proof or Demonſtration *à priori*, from any antecedent Cauſe: For *Principii nulla eſt origo: nam à principio oriuntur omnia, ipſum autem nulla alia ex re naſci poteſt, nec enim eſſet principium, quod gigneretur aliunde.* Here the learned *Clemens* of *Alexandria* teaches, "That God is the moſt "difficult of all to be diſcourſed of, becauſe ſince "the Principle of every thing is hard to be found "out, the firſt and moſt ancient Principle of all, "which was the Cauſe of all other Things, muſt "needs be the hardeſt of all to be declared or mani-"feſted." And afterwards adds, "But neither "can God be apprehended by any demonſtrative "Science, ἐπιστήμη τῇ ἀποδεικτικῇ, for ſuch Science "is from Things before in order of Nature, and "more knowable; whereas nothing can exiſt before "that which is altogether unmade." In all theſe Caſes, we have an excellent Rule laid down by *Clemens Alexandrinus*. "Let us not content ourſelves with "the Teſtimonies of Men; but let us confirm that "which comes in Queſtion by the Word of God, "which is to be credited beyond all Demonſtration; "or rather is itſelf the only Demonſtration."

Cic. Tuſc. Q. l. 1.

Strom. 5. p. 588.

Timæus. Clem. Alex. Strom. 7.

And I might here juſtly object againſt the pretended Perſpicuity of ſupernatural Truths, that ſtrange Diſſent which has always been betwixt the Judgments of learned and even pious Men, concerning the Degrees of Validity in their Proofs, and whether they are concluſive or not; every one juſtifies his own Arguments as demonſtrative, and makes Objections againſt others, which have raiſed Difficulties not admitting of an eaſy Solution, by the Maxims of Philoſophy; what one has called demonſtrative, has been confuted by another, as wanting all that Evidence, which can be the certain Character of Truth; or rejected as mere Sophiſm. Who more renowned than *Deſcartes?* He offers Demonſtrations of the Exi-

ſtence of God, which at the *Sorbonne* have numberleſs Objections raiſed againſt them, and pronounced inconcluſive. The want of this clear undoubted Evidence has occaſioned in ſome a Suſpenſion of Mind, and made a famous Schoolman *(Gabriel Biel)* who had waded through the Depths of Metaphyſicks, to declare, "That all the Proofs which Reaſon can afford "of the Exiſtence of God, are only probable." But this I only mention to ſhew, that even Demonſtration appears in different Lights, and ſuch are the Prejudices of the Mind, as not to diſcern the true Weight and Force of its own Arguments.

The Exiſtence of a Deity is an unqueſtionable Truth, and ſo ſelf-evident, that it cannot be propoſed, but, the Inſtant the Mind hears and underſtands the Terms, it muſt aſſent to it as a moſt reaſonable Belief; and when it has a moral Certainty (or the higheſt Evidence the Subject will admit of) that it is a Revelation from God, it will yield the fulleſt Aſſent, wherein there is no Doubt or Objection, that it is unqueſtionably true. If the Mind withholds its Aſſent, it is not for want of ſufficient Light to convince it, but from being influenced and blinded with unnatural Paſſions and Luſts, and thereby becomes inexcuſable: To this End, God propounds them as the Subject of Aſſent and Belief; but intends not a ſenſible or Mathematical Demonſtration of them, becauſe ſuch Evidence of things not ſeen, would not be Faith, which is all he requires of us; and if none were to believe a God, till they could prove it Geometrically, Atheiſm would be the Natural Religion of the World, as it alſo would have been, if Revelation had not taught us the Being and Perfection of the Deity.

And from this ſure Foundation, the Teſtimony of God, and that only, (not from the Wit, Invention, or Cogitations of Men) have all thoſe noble Arguments been raiſed, to prove the neceſſary Self-exiſtence of one ſupreme independent Cauſe; and which have been urged with ſuch ſucceſs againſt Error and Infidelity; that whoever did not acknowledge them

to

to be convincing, have been forced to retreat to the groſſeſt Abſurdities and Contradictions; no Way being left to defend their Aſſertions by Reaſon, but by admitting what Reaſon, as reaſonable, can never conſent to, which is moſt abſurd; and they ſhut their Eyes under the glaring Light of Truth, that they might not ſee it, which is Falſhood and a Lye.

Yet theſe Arguments, however concluſive, have not that immediate Evidence which is called Mathematical; if they had, every Mind tho' ſavage and uncultured would at once diſcern the Force of them, as perſpicuouſly, as that two and two make four; whereas the Diſtance and Sublimity of the Subject, the Slowneſs of the Procedure, and the long Connexion of Truths with each other, require Study and Penetration, a clearer Diſcernment, and more ſolid Judgment, than are to be met with in the greater part of Mankind: Nor is it in our Power to make them ſenſible of the Relation of the ſeveral Propoſitions, how the Thread of Argumentation lies, or where the Certainty of the Evidence ariſes: They muſt be led by the Hand from Principle to Principle, and when all is done, the Reaſons on which they believe, do not make them know it is impoſſible the thing ſhould be otherwiſe.

Nor is this Obſcurity owing to the Subject alone, but frequently to the Method of Deduction, and the Choice of Mediums, not always the moſt clear and exact, to fill up the great Space between an omnipotent Cauſe and a created Effect; which diſtant Extremes, Men according to their ſeveral Judgments and Apprehenſions of things, bring together by intermediate Notions and Truths, formed into Syllogiſms, ſo as to carry all along a moral Evidence and Certainty with them; For the Works of Creation are the Proof which God moſt frequently appeals to, and whereon thoſe commonly uſed by Philoſophers and Divines are grounded. That an infinite Succeſſion of Cauſes is impoſſible and abſurd; therefore there muſt be a Firſt Cauſe, on which all are dependent; that

all

all things which exiſt, cannot be contingent, therefore ſomething muſt neceſſarily exiſt; that Matter cannot move itſelf, therefore there muſt be a Firſt Mover; that in the ſeveral Beings which exiſt, there are ſeveral Degrees of Perfection, therefore there muſt be one ſupremely perfect, in Proportion to which other Beings are ſaid to be more or leſs perfect; that all things have Operations for ſome End, and whatſoever worketh ſo, muſt be directed to it. Rational Creatures may apprehend the Goodneſs of ſuch End, but other natural Agents cannot, therefore muſt be directed in their Actions by ſome other Counſel than their own; that even Men in natural Acts uſe no Deliberation, which nevertheleſs are directed to their proper Ends, therefore overruled and directed by a greater Wiſdom than their own. And laſtly, the Structure of the Univerſe, and Manner of its Subſiſtence in ſuch an excellent Order in all its Parts, and with ſuch amazing Regularity.

But all theſe Concluſions are drawn from two Propoſitions of God's own teaching; *I am*, or I exiſt; and *I made the Heavens and the Earth, and all things therein*: Whence the Inference to be proved, is, that he is God, the firſt ſupreme Cauſe, moſt perfect in his Nature, neceſſarily Self-exiſting, and that beſides him, there is none elſe; all which are undoubted Truths, but the full Evidence of them does not lie in a Point, like Geometrical Demonſtration, but takes in a greater Compaſs, is gradually obtained by Deduction and Conſequence, leading the Mind from one Concluſion to another, till there is ſuch a Degree of Certainty, that it is irrational or impoſſible to imagine it ſhould be otherwiſe, and raiſes in the Mind a Sentiment and Conviction, againſt which Reaſon can make no Objection, and fixes an Impreſſion on the Underſtanding, as clear as Light to the Eyes, and of any equal Degree of Certainty with any other kind of Evidence; and from Principles thus revealed to us by God, flow all the Delineations of ſpiritual Truths and natural Re-

Religion, which is founded on the divine Perfections; and of which without a Teacher from above, we had neither had Apprehenſion nor Proof.

It is not indeed yet agreed by the learned World, what Degree of Evidence theſe Proofs contain: Some have aſſured us of a demonſtrative Mathematical Certainty, ſuch as is in the Geometrical Sciences: But others with greater Caution and more Truth have reſted it on a moral Certainty: So *Plato* defines σοφία, by which he generally underſtands divine Philoſophy, to be an indemonſtrable Science, Σοφία ἐπιστήμη ἀναπόδεικτος. Which depending upon the Clearneſs of thoſe Mediums and Arguments, which are uſed to prove it according to the Degrees of Force and Perſpicuity in ſuch Proof, will be the Force and Evidence of moral Certainty. And in the Queſtion before us, there is all the Proof that the Nature of the thing will admit, ſo as to exclude all manner of Doubt, put the Truth beyond Exception, and render the Diſbelief of it abſurd and almoſt impoſſible. For whoever will carefully attend to the Arguments uſed, will find this fundamental Truth ſo cogently offered, the Proofs of it ſo evident and inconteſtable, that though the Certainty be not ſcientifick or geometrical, yet is ſo unqueſtionable, that the Mind can no more withſtand, or doubt of it, than it does of its own Exiſtence, or Power of Reaſoning. Plato defin.

And in this Proceeding God deals with us as with rational Creatures, in having given them Faculties to diſcern, and be convinced of the Truth of what he propoſes; it is no Virtue to believe the Exiſtence of ſenſible Objects; to believe a Mathematical Demonſtration, is Knowledge or Science, not Faith: But a firm Aſſent to the reality of Things inviſible: To give them a Subſiſtence in our Minds, a Subſtance to what is only hoped for, a real Being to what is no way the Object of Senſe, is that ſpiritual Evidence and ſincere Faith, which God demands

Heb. x. 39. demands and accepts of all them, *who believe to the ſaving of the Soul.* And ſuch a Reliance on the Divine Teſtimony, an Aſſent wrought by the Spirit of God, is as certain, as ſtrong and efficacious a Conviction of the Mind, and leaves as little room for Doubt, as the Mathematical or Ocular Demonſtration.

It is beſides no ſmall Diſadvantage to Religion or Morality, to pretend that they are capable of a Certainty, which the Nature of them will not admit; it is only weakening the Cauſe to produce in its behalf Arguments which cannot be ſupported, and omit the higheſt Evidence it is capable of: For as a learned Prelate argues, if there were any one demonſtrative Argument, or Mathematical Certainty, for the Exiſtence of a Deity; this would render all other Arguments from Scripture or Reaſon entirely needleſs; and there could not be ſuch a thing as a ſpeculative Atheiſt in the World; whereas the Experience of all Ages hath ſhewn, that there are many ſuch Fools, otherwiſe of great Learning and Natural Sagacity, who have ſaid in their Hearts, and argued that *there is no God.* Nay every one would have a determinate ſcientifick Knowledge of it; there could be no Variety of Opinions in the World, nor any ſuch thing as Idolatry, to worſhip a falſe God, or more than one.

Secondly, It is of a moſt pernicious Conſequence; for if theſe Doctrines be capable of demonſtrative Proof, nothing need be regarded further than as it is made appear to have ſuch Evidence: And Libertines and Unbelievers will never fail to demand it, though it is what the very Nature of them will not admit, and therefore an impoſſible Task to do.

Thirdly, If mere Morality (as called) is ſtrictly demonſtrable, and Revelation capable of no more than Moral Evidence, then the laſt can never be on an equal foot of Certainty with it, though wholly

ly dependent on it: A Conſequence thoſe who are evilly inclined to Revelation plainly ſee, and accordingly inſiſt on Mathematical Certainty and Evidence in Religion: And from thence it is that modern Metaphyſical Morality is grown into Faſhion, and that our Writers on that Subject have unwarily formed their Diſcourſes to the prevailing Taſte and Genius of an unbelieving Age; though nothing is further from the Nature of Mathematical Certainty, than Metaphyſical Abſtractions; and Mankind would be in a deſperate Condition, if they were to depend upon ſuch Abſtractions, for the fundamental Point of all Religion, and were to be conducted through an intricate Maze of notional Abſtractions, before they could arrive at this Concluſion; *therefore there is a God.*

But the Procedure in Moral Certainty is by a long and imperceptible Series of Reaſoning, the Deductions which the Intellect makes are purely rational; all its Reſolutions and Concluſions are entirely abſtracted from any immediate Act of Senſation; its Reaſonings are all about Notions and Conceptions, not only very complex in themſelves, each of them being a Compoſition of many Ingredients, but wonderfully varied according to the different Sentiments of Men and their oppoſite Ways of thinking; which makes the Guidance of the Mind, and the coming at Knowledge this way ſlow and embarraſſing; theſe Operations are what few are capable to judge of, much leſs perform; what then ſhall the Millions of rational Creatures do to direct themſelves to their final End? If amidſt a Variety of Concluſions they do not always ſingle out the right, if they introduce but one wrong Medium, if they miſtake in apprehending the Premiſes or drawing the Inferences, inſtead of Evidence and Truth they will have Confuſion and Error. All this is impoſſible, a flat Contradiction to the known and common Abili-

ties

ties of Nature; and had God required it of them, he would have given them ſuitable Faculties and Operations to direct them, and attain their End.

It is indeed pretended that Revelation comes in by the by, only as an Aid to Nature; and that a well atteſted Interpoſition of Divine Authority becomes unto all Men a juſt Ground of Aſſent to thoſe Truths, which to make out by the help of Reaſon only, was a Work of Difficulty, Time, and Study; therefore not neceſſary, but might have been omitted, as the Intent of it was only to ſave us a little Time and Labour. A very gracious Account of the Divine Will and Goodneſs! But if Reaſon was the only Help intended to come at ſupernatural Truths; why did he who directs all things by unerring Wiſdom and unconfined Mercy, make it a Work of ſuch Difficulty for Man to know his chiefeſt Good? Could he not have given him ſuperior Faculties, with the ſame Eaſe that he gave the preſent? Or rather, is the not having given him Abilities ſufficient for that Purpoſe, the Reaſon why God made his Revelation, that being the Purpoſe of his Will, whereby Man was to come at the Knowledge of all things neceſſary to his End, and thereby exerciſe his Faith, to which ſo many Promiſes are made?

Clarke, Serm. 80. Vol. 1.

And that he never could have known them without Revelation, I think plainly appears from the ableſt Defenders of Natural Religion; that though all the great Truths of it, the Being and Attributes of God, the Unalterableneſs of Moral Obligations, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Expectation of future Rewards and Puniſhments, are diſcoverable by Reaſon and Argumentation; yet the greateſt Philoſophers were in continual Diſputes, and in many Degrees of Uncertainty concerning the very fundamental and moſt important Doctrines of Truth and Reaſon; and the quibbling and vain Methods of diſputing among the greater Part

Ib.

Part of the Heathen Philoſophers, were only Shadows of Reaſoning falſly ſo called.

Is not this an expreſs Contrariety, that all great Truths are diſcoverable by Reaſon, yet the moſt improved Reaſoners could never diſcover or fix the very fundamental Doctrines of Reaſon and Truth; neither was it poſſible for them to do it, ſince their beſt Method of Argumentation was quibbling, vain, and only the Shadow of Reaſoning. Are not ſuch Retreats as theſe a giving up the Cauſe, and more than a moral Proof, that all they ſay on this Head is only ſyſtematical, not real, or natural?

For Reaſon to have a Law, and Nature a Religion, which neither Reaſon nor Nature can find out the fundamental Truths of, is abſurd and monſtrous: Law muſt be perſpicuous, or it has no Right to Obedience; and the End of Religion muſt be open to the Underſtanding, or it is impoſſible to diſcern or purſue it: It is therefore neither Law nor Religion, if a virtuous honeſt Mind, after due Application, cannot ſee the Precepts and Obligations of them. If there be but one Exemption, the Rule is not general; if there be Millions, it is no Rule at all: Yet the *Nomades*, and *New-Holland* Men, have the ſame Nature, the ſame Rights, and the ſame End with other Nations; therefore under the ſame Obligations, and if ſo, muſt have Power to know and fulfil them; but this they neither did, nor have Power to do, and as Impoſſibilities cannot oblige, it is neither the Law nor Religion of Nature, becauſe not Univerſal as the Nature: I need not inſtance in theſe, becauſe (as we have ſeen) *Athens* and *Rome* were Strangers to the very Foundations of them.

To talk therefore of Revelation as a Crutch, to ſave Difficulty, Time, or Study, is an empty, lazy Sophiſm: How comes it to paſs, that the greateſt Men, who conſumed their whole Time and Study herein, did not accompliſh it? Or if Nature can do

do it, why ſo much Learning and Application? To all natural Acts they are ſuperfluous; and what cannot be had but by them, is owing to them, not to Nature: But alas! neither Study nor Nature were ſufficient for it: For (as the ſame Author obſerves) thoſe ancient Sages who were ſo impatient after Wiſdom, as to exhauſt their Lives and Spirits in purſuit of it, were ever loſt in Uncertainties about the moſt fundamental Doctrines: They had Truth in few, Miſtakes in many, Doubts in all important Points; ſo that Revelation could not be intended to ſave Time and Study, as they ſerved to ſo little purpoſe. And as they had Doubts, Miſtakes, and but the Shadow of Truth in any important Point, it is an Abuſe of the common Senſe of Mankind, to pretend that Nature or Reaſon could come at the Truth of one ſupernatural Doctrine, the ſpiritual Nature and Perfections of God, the Immortality of the Soul, a future State, the Origin of the Univerſe, *&c.*

This intellectual Pride, or ſole Reliance upon Reaſon, has given us in later Ages lamentable Inſtances of human Frailty, by the fall of wiſe Men into deſperate Errors; from imagining there was no Difficulty they were not able to account for, and taking no other Clue to direct them, they utterly departed from Truth, and adopted the moſt heretical and deteſtable Opinions.

This *Simplicius* obſerves of *Ariſtotle*, that confining himſelf to the Sphere of his own Reaſon, he would examine divine Matters by Nature, and admit nothing but what was grounded one Nature's Light, or rather his own corrupt Reaſon. Whence he rejected the divine Doctrines his Maſter learned from the Eaſtern Traditions, becauſe they would not ſtoop to his proud Reaſon and Method of Argumentation. This made the *Leviathan* of the laſt Century publickly profeſs Atheiſm, and a Disbelief of all things which admit not of ſenſible Demonſtration.

And

And the ſame Fate muſt attend all thoſe Reaſoners of Nature, whoſe ſtubborn Minds will not ſubmit to Revelation, becauſe not evident in the ſame manner as a Problem in *Euclid*, but will have Demonſtration and Mathematical Certainty for every thing, tho' from the Nature of the Subject it be incapable of it. Though ſurely it is not the Character of Wiſdom to demand an Impoſſibility; or for Reaſon, becauſe it cannot maſter Truth, to believe an Abſurdity; but this is copying after the Ancients, who, becauſe they could not prove the Creation, were ſatisfied to maintain the Eternity of Matter.

Nay amongſt the moſt Orthodox, is there any one Syſtem of ſpeculative Points, in the Proofs whereof all agree? ſome things may be true, but are founded on ſuch remote Principles and Conſequences, that they cannot with Certainty be depended on. An Argument is ſaid to be concluſive here, but ſeems weak or fallacious there: The Principle is good, but the Concluſion not indubitable. This might have been put in a ſtronger Light, and that with more Prudence and Caution omitted; there is ſome Error or Defect in them all, which other learned Men diſſent from; and where there is one Defect, there may be more; ſo that in a Syſtem, the Product of mere Reaſon, every Man muſt go through the whole Operation to ſettle his Judgment, which the Bulk of Mankind are unable to do; or depend upon that of others which is fallible, therefore no ſure Reliance on it in Matters of Salvation.

To remedy which, God who is infallible, has made ſuch Revelations of himſelf in his Word, and by his Works, as are neceſſary and ſufficient for our preſent State; and perhaps as far as the Proportion betwixt the Object to be known and the Faculty to apprehend will bear; by which we are able to aſcend to a ſufficient Knowledge of him, and if more

had been requiſite to conduct our Contemplations, or direct our Lives, he would not have denied the Means of attaining it: To inquire further than this, will be no more than Vanity and Preſumption, in which Men are quickly confounded; and many have loſt their Religion and Devotion too, by thus curiouſly prying into the Myſteries and Secrets of God. No one need be aſhamed of not knowing what God has not revealed; and he that would go further, gives up his Wiſdom, and endangers his Safety: The only ſure Rule is, to leave off inquiring where God leaves off to teach us; for there are Bounds ſet to human Underſtanding and Curioſity; there is a Danger in wantonly preſſing beyond them; and it is real Wiſdom to deſire Ignorance of what God would not have us know.

This ſame Procedure will hold true of all other divine Subjects; I ſhall mention but one, and that is the Immortality of the Soul, concerning which let us hear Mr. *Locke* in his Reply to the Biſhop of *Worceſter*. " Your Accuſation of my leſſening the " Credibility of theſe Articles of Faith, is founded " on this, That the Article of the Immortality of " the Soul abates of its Credibility, if it be allowed, " that its Immateriality (which is the ſuppoſed " Proof from Reaſon and Philoſophy of its Immor- " tality) cannot be demonſtrated from Natural Rea- " ſon; which Argument of your Lordſhip's bot- " toms, as I humbly conceive, on this, That Di- " vine Revelation abates of its Credibility in all thoſe " Articles it propoſes, proportionably as human " Reaſon fails to ſupport the Teſtimony of God. " And all that your Lordſhip in thoſe Paſſages has " ſaid, when examined, will, I ſuppoſe, be found to " import thus much, *viz.* Does God propoſe any " thing to Mankind to be believed? It is very fit " and credible to be believed, if Reaſon can " demonſtrate it to be true: But if human Reaſon " comes ſhort in the Caſe, and cannot make it out,

Anſwer to Second Letter.

" its

" its Credibility is thereby leſſened; which is in ef-
" fect to ſay, That the Veracity of God is not a
" firm and ſure Foundation of Faith to rely upon,
" without the concurrent Teſtimony of Reaſon,
" *i. e.* with Reverence be it ſpoken, God is not to be
" believed on his own Word, unleſs what he reveals
" be in it ſelf credible, and might be believed with-
" out him. Your Lordſhip ſays, You do not Que-
" ſtion whether God can give Immortality to a
" material Subſtance; but you ſay it takes off very
" much from the Evidence of Immortality, if it
" depends wholly upon God's giving that which of
" its own Nature it is not capable of. To which
" I reply; Any one's not being able to demonſtrate
" the Soul to be immaterial, takes off not very
" much, nor at all from the Evidence of its Im-
" mortality, if God has revealed that it ſhall be
" immortal, becauſe the Veracity of God is a Demon-
" ſtration of the Truth of what he has revealed, and
" the want of another Demonſtration of a Propoſiti-
" on, that is demonſtratively true, takes not off from
" the Evidence of it. For where there is a clear De-
" monſtration, there is as much Evidence as any Truth
" can have that is not ſelf-evident. Can any one who
" admits of Divine Revelation, think this Propoſition
" leſs credible, The Bodies of Men after the Reſur-
" rection, ſhall live for ever; than this, The Souls of
" Men ſhall, after the Reſurrection, live for ever?
" For that he muſt do, if he think either of them is
" leſs credible than the other. If this be ſo, Reaſon
" is to be conſulted how far God is to be believed,
" and the Credit of the Divine Teſtimony muſt re-
" ceive its Force from the Evidence of Reaſon, which
" is evidently to take away the Credibility of Divine
" Revelation, in all ſupernatural Truths, wherein
" the Evidence of Reaſon fails."

Thus far Mr. *Locke*, that great Maſter of Reaſon. Nothing need be added to it. The World is convinced how much he triumphed over his learned Ad-

verſary in this Diſpute. Reaſon has its Province, and a very large one, but is not the Meaſure of ſupernatural Truths. We are Chriſtians by Faith, not by Natural Reaſon, and muſt therefore believe, not in ourſelves but in God, in thoſe things which Religion, and not Reaſon teaches. The Reſult of *Cajetan*'s long Enquiry into this Subject, was to embrace the Opinion he once had ſcoffed at, and make this Confeſſion, "I believe that our Souls are immortal, "but I do not know it," *i. e.* He found no Demonſtrations from Natural Reaſon, that were concluſive and convincing. No Foundation is ſo immoveable as the Word of God; no Demonſtration ſo clear as the Divine Authority; no Truth ſo evident as what God affirms; nor is it Natural Reaſon, or Philoſophical Notions, but Faith, which will make us acceptable to him.

If after all it be ſaid that the Heathens did come at the Knowledge of God, a religious Behaviour towards him, the Immortality of the Soul, *&c.* and that by the Light of Nature and unaſſiſted Reaſon only, without any Help or Inſtruction but their own Ratiocinations, by Obſervation, Collection, and Inference from ſenſible Objects; a Point that many are willing to believe and to perſuade others.

I might as juſtly anſwer, That they never did come to any tolerably adequate Conceptions of the Supreme Being, much leſs of his Will, or that Worſhip which muſt be due to him; nor of the Immortality of the Soul, or a future State: That it is almoſt impoſſible to recount the many impious and falſe Opinions they conceived of the Deity; what Vanities, abſurd and ridiculous things they looked upon as God, and with what barbarous accurſed Rites they offered their Worſhip to him.

But theſe Points ſhall have a full Examination in the enſuing Parts of this Treatiſe: What their Notions and Doctrines were in Theology; what their ſolemn Acts of Worſhip and Piety; what their Practices

tices or Morality; and how far their ſo much boaſted Philoſophy conduced to the Knowledge of theſe important Truths, or to the final Good and End of Man: That we may the better judge how far Nature and Reaſon are ſufficient for theſe things; for if they did not direct the Heathens, neither can they others; and if the former knew not God, nor worſhipped him as God, all the ſhining Scraps and Quotations cited from them, will be no more than empty big ſwelling Words, without any Truth or Meaning.

Reaſon and Nature are the ſame in Heathens and Chriſtians; its Faculties and Operations equal, and one cannot, by the Exerciſe of it, do more than the others did. If then the Religion and Law of Nature be unalterable and eternal, they muſt have been under all the moral Obligations, that we now are; and if the Precepts of Natural Religion and Law be perſpicuous, clear and obvious to Reaſon, they muſt have been univerſally and equally known, (eſpecially to their wiſe Men) in the ancient as well as preſent Ages. But if this be falſe in fact, if no one did it, if among all the Writings of the Heathen World, (notwithſtanding ſo many glittering Sentences, and almoſt divine Diſcourſes) there cannot be extracted any tolerably explicit Syſtem of God, his Providence, Attributes and Will, the Immortality of the Soul, or a future State; but in every important Point there were horrid Defects, and monſtrous Errors; no Agreement or Certainty amongſt them, ſome affirming, ſome denying, others doubting; in all Places ſhocking and impious Principles, together with the vileſt Practices, allowed and tolerated, contrary both to Nature and Reaſon:

The Concluſion muſt be, That natural Light was inſufficient to Divine Knowledge; and that their having any Notions or Apprehenſions of ſpiritual things, muſt be derived from ſome other Fountain; except we are content to ſay, that Shadows and Subſtances are the ſame thing, or that Reaſon could diſcern

cern the one but not the other, altho' given us for ſuch purpoſe; from which Opinion little Advantage would redound to Man, or Honour to God.

We have ſeen it to be the concurring Judgment of the whole World, Heathens, Jews, and Chriſtians, that we cannot know the Firſt Cauſe by its Effects, becauſe of the vaſt Diſtance between it and the moſt exalted Mind; ſo that one muſt always be infinitely removed from the other, nor by any Analogy from viſible things. The Philoſophers compared him to the Sun, as the moſt glorious Object of Senſe; but the Similitude could only caſt a Shade upon him. *Plotinus* ſays, *We have no Knowledge or Underſtanding of him.* *Parmenides* and *Dionyſius*, *That we ſpeak of him only by Negatives and Relations.* *Caſſiodore* ſays, *That the higheſt Point of Wiſdom is to know, that God can do more than human Senſe can conceive.* And it is an Expreſſion of their own, *That our Underſtanding with regard to God, is as the Eyes of an Owl to the Brightneſs of the Sun.* So it was univerſally agreed to the Days of *Iamblichus*, in the laſt Ages of Philoſophy, *That Human Nature can neither reaſon, nor ſpeak of God, nor perform any Divine Works without God.*

There remains then no other way to come at the Knowledge of the Firſt Cauſe, but by its own Manifeſtations; what Nature could not do, Grace and Mercy have ſupplied. Nothing (without a Miracle) can aſcend to Heaven, but what firſt came down from thence: And in this Method do we attain the Knowledge of the Celeſtial Hierarchy. The Divine Light deſcended on the Angelick Nature, and afterwards by Revelation, Inſpiration, and Inſtruction, manifeſts and imparts itſelf to our Capacities and Underſtanding; and the Human Mind muſt aſcend by the ſame Scale to the Contemplation of ſpiritual inviſible Objects: For by a due Meditation on what has been revealed from above, reverently examining, weighing and conſidering the Secrets of Heaven, and

that

that Illumination of the Divine Splendour which is in Angels, ſhe gradually increaſes in the Knowledge of ſupernatural things, till at laſt ſhe grows ſtronger, and is able to raiſe herſelf up to a diſtant Contemplation (all that her Faculties can admit) of the Glories which encompaſs the Supreme Infinite. For the Notices here are proportioned to our State; but Reaſon is weak, and the Natural Man not capable of the things of the Spirit, becauſe *they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* In theſe, Faith is the Eye, and the Spirit and Word of God the Light which diſpels the Darkneſs of the Mind, opens to it a new Scene of Inviſibles, the Creator of all things, glorious but immaterial Subſtances, infinite Wiſdom, Perfection and Beatitudes, which a Finite Intellect could never have enquired into or diſcovered.

And when the Firſt Cauſe has thus manifeſted it ſelf, the Works become proper Witneſſes to what the Word has revealed concerning its Greatneſs and Perfection; Then natural Means become Illuſtrations of the ſupernatural ones, and viſible things an Evidence of Intellectuals. The Grandeur, Excellence, and Order of the Univerſe, are a ſenſible Proof, and unqueſtionable Demonſtration of its being the Effect of infinite Power and Wiſdom, and thus the Heavens declare the Glories of the inviſible Godhead: For (with *Euripides*) ἀστέρες δ' ἐν οὐρανῷ ποικίλμα τέκτονος σοφοῦ, *The Stars in Heaven are the Variety of a wiſe Artificer.*

On the whole, we may ſafely conclude, as *Plato* did, from the concurrent Opinions of all Ages and Places, " That there is the greateſt and moſt evident Reaſon " to believe, whenever Men began to ſpeculate about " the Gods, whether there were any ſuch Beings, how " they exiſted, and what were their Employments; " That none of theſe Opinions took their Riſe from " the Wit or Reaſon of wiſe Men." That is, not from Nature or Reaſon, which is the Point contended for, and at firſt propoſed to be enquired into. Epinom. p. 988.

If the farther Purſuit of this Subject may (in the Opinion of wiſe impartial Men) contribute any Service to Religion, I ſhall proceed to confirm what has been hitherto ſaid from Fact and Experience; the only Arguments which can give true light to, or be concluſive, in the Enquiry before us: And endeavour to ſhew in the

Second Book, That the beſt Notions the Heathens were able to conceive of God and ſupernatural Truths, ſuch as the Immortality of the Soul, a future State, *&c.* were vaſtly imperfect, or altogether falſe; that their moſt ſolemn Acts of Worſhip were idolatrous, ſuperſtitious, and utterly unbecoming the Divine Nature; and their Moral Actions, which they held to be juſt and good, were impious, wicked and deteſtable: From whence it will follow in the

Third Book, That Philoſophy or Reaſon are wholly inſufficient to preſcribe a Law of Acting or a Rule of Life to Man, or direct him to the Perfection of his Being, his final End, and ultimate Happineſs. And to complete the Subject, I ſhall, in the

Fourth Book, Trace out the only Method whereby the Heathen World did come at the Names and Notices of Divine Truths, which we find among them.

And every Argument through the whole will tend to confirm this ſingle Point, *That the Knowledge of Divine Things cannot be attained by Reaſon or Nature.*

F I N I S.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

